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John Coffee
A NEW
ESTIMATE
OF

MANNERS and PRINCIPLES:

Being a COMPARISON between
Ancient and Modern TIMES,
In the three Great Articles
OF
Knowledge, Happiness, and Virtue;

Both with Respect
To MANKIND at Large,
AND TO
This KINGDOM in Particular.

*Demo unum, demo et item unum ;
Dum cadat elusus ratione ruentis acervi,
Qui redit in fastos, et VIRTUTEM ÆSTIMAT ANNIS.*

CAMBRIDGE,

Printed by J. BENTHAM, Printer to the UNIVERSITY ;
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M. DCC. LX.

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AN
A P O L O G Y
TO THE
AUTHOR of a former *Estimate*.

SIR,

WHEN I presumed to call my present production, *A New Estimate*; I did not intend to have the spurious issue laid at your door. Far be the thought from me, of attempting to injure any man's fair fame, by such base means! besides, the make and features of my poor offspring are so totally unlike your's, that an imposition of that kind, had I aimed at it, would have been too glaring to pass undetected.

I will freely own to you therefore, that it was merely a Bookseller's consideration, which induced me to borrow the title of your late, celebrated work: I was told, that the sale of a Book depended intirely upon the name it bore; which indeed I was inclined beforehand to think might, in a great measure, be the case; though, I own, I never, till now, apprehended it's meaning to be, what I find it is, not a metaphorical one, but strictly literal; not signifying the reputation of a book, but merely it's title-page. And it seems, Booksellers are as shy of standing for a book, as some Godfathers are, in another instance; unless they can have the naming of the Brat, when they attend, with other Gossips, on the due celebration of that rite. I hope therefore, a young Author, who would make his appearance in the world with as much advantage, as he could, may be excused for endeavouring to usher in his first performance under a favorite name.

But

But I have more than this to plead in my defence; for I find, what I have done is no more, than what is constantly practised, and is imposed as a kind of tax upon you great Authors; which, by custom, you are obliged to submit to: no sooner comes out *High life below stairs*, and has, what they call, a Run; but out pops a paultry imitation, intituled, *Low life above stairs*. No wonder then, if, after a valuable book is published, called an *Estimate*, you should see following, at a proper distance, a *New Estimate*; which perhaps, for the future, will come out, year after year, like a new year's Almanac, or a new Memorandum Book.

But however alike I may be, in other respects, to my brother Imitators; I cannot help claiming this superiority to myself, that I fairly declare, how the case stands; whereas I find, this is a point, which, in general, is most industriously concealed: for, upon examining with the utmost diligence, I

cannot, in all that numberless train of Magazines, with which the literary world is at present so plentifully stored, discover one, that has paid the least respect or acknowledgment to Mr. *E. Cave*, at *St. John's Gate*; though the undoubted and indisputable, original Author of the first of these commodious repositories of human learning, commonly called, *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Neither can I help observing, in what a barefaced manner Mr. *Baldwin*, Mr. *Newbery*, Mr. *Sheepey*, and others yearly go on to publish, what they are pleased to call, their *Pocket Companions*, *Daily Journals*, &c. without once taking notice of what Mess^{rs} *R. & J. Dodsley* constantly inform them of, that *Their's*, "as it was the *first*, so it is still the *best* book of the kind."

I shall mention but one thing more in my vindication; that I have stayed long enough to see, whether you would continue the work, or no. But, though you had now so fair an opportunity, at
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the end of the glorious 1759, of telling your countrymen better things; and of shewing the wonderful and surprising efficacy of your writings; which, in so short a time, have brought about such an effectual alteration in the manners of his Majesty's subjects; yet I perceive, you have let it slip: which inclines me to think, you have intirely given up the business of *Estimate-making*. And therefore I look upon myself as fully excused for attempting to avail myself of the opening, to set up in that branch of trade; in which, if I am but so happy, as to give as much satisfaction to those, who shall honor me with their custom, as you did; I shall ever esteem it one of the most fortunate events in my whole life.

Thinking myself, by this time, fully justified in your opinion for the step I have taken, I am emboldened to take the farther liberty of making your modesty give way to my importunity; whilst I supply what I suppose you

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thought

thought would not come so properly from yourself, and enlarge a little on the merit of your late, inestimable *Estimate*.

When one reads in it then the following, animated description of the *ruling manners* of this kingdom, which obtained only two years ago: "A man
" who should go out of the common
" road of life, in pursuit of glory, and
" serve the public at the expence of his
" ease, his fortune, or his pleasure,
" would be stared and laughed at in
" every fashionable circle, as a silly
" fellow, who meddled with things that
" did not concern him: as an idiot,
" who preferred shadows to realities,
" and needless toil to pleasurable enjoyment." And, that "The laurel wreath,
" once aspired after as the highest object
" of ambition, would now be rated at
" the market price of it's materials, and
" derided as a *three-penny Crown*." When one reads these, I say, and some other *similar* passages in your book, and
hears

hears you farther declare, that “ A
“ change of manners, and principles
“ may be justly regarded as an impossi-
“ ble event, during the present age;
“ and rather to be wished than hoped
“ for in the next;” and yet perceives
at the same time, that this change has
in fact already happened; to such a
degree, that they, who were then, as
you tenderly express it, *the contempt of*
Europe, are now become the terror of
it: to what can one ascribe such an
amazing alteration? To nothing, am I
ready to answer, since miracles have
ceased, but to the writings of a certain
great author; which undoubtedly con-
tained the grand specific, that has
wrought this cure: which by some se-
cret and insensible kind of opera-
tion has produced such sudden and
surprizing effects, though the man-
ner may be difficult to be explain-
ed; which, by diffusing at once such
a new and unusual spirit through the
camp and the navy, has so amply re-
trieved

ried the honor of our arms, and raised to so high a pitch the reputation of our country; which, by its wonderful influence in rousing the indolent, and animating the careless; in giving manliness to the effeminate; public love to the selfish; and courage to the voluptuary; has thus totally changed the whole face of our affairs: and made the upper ranks of our fellow-subjects rise up in arms, as one man, with the true *spirit of union and defence*, in support of *British Liberty* at home; and abroad has caused a handful of *Englishmen* to baffle the whole power of *France*; in such a manner, as will make the plains of *Minden* vie, in future story, with those of *Agincourt* and *Cressy*: in short, has enabled the soft and delicate soldier not only to bear the common toils of war; but has carried him safely through the unusual hardship of a winter's campaign, in a most inclement season: whilst the poor, puny, sickly sailor has, by their salutiferous quality, been rendered

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ed equal to a conflict with enemies and elements at once.*

I know it will hurt you to have so much said of the great efficacy of your writings; because you disclaim all *Panaceas*, as the very *Empiricism of Politics*. But though you don't, act like the man, who sells the *famous Pectoral Drops*, or *grand renovating Elixir of life*; stand at the corner of a street, and slip bills into our hands, with directions to the true original warehouse; yet I cannot help concluding with the poet,

*Sunt verba et voces,—sunt certa piacula, quæ nos
Ter purè lecto possunt re-creare libello. scil. tuo.*

Which I think, now the secret is out, would not make a bad motto to the *sixteenth edition* of your book.

This indeed was a point, which you most carefully kept out of sight; and I flatter myself, I can guess the reason, why you did so. You plainly saw, that
we

* Alluding to Sir *Edward Hawke's* Victory.

we wanted phyfic; and yet thought, we were fo childish, there would be no getting us to take any, if offered in the form of a pill or a bolus; (that is, under the disgustful appearance of direct advice :) and therefore you prudently intimated, you intended no such thing: though at the same time you were administering the proper remedies under the pleasing vehicle of an Estimate: when instantly, the disorders were removed; the noxious humours passed off; and, what is very surprizing, we had swallowed our cure, without knowing any thing of the matter.

I am aware, it will be said, that you have had many and able coadjutors in this matter: people, who are envious of letting one man bear away such a load of praise, will talk, some of *two*, some of ten or twenty, *Great Men*, who must share this honor with you. But what signify a parcel of names, that serve only to fill the mouths of a mob; your *Wolfe's*, *Hawke's*, or *Boscawen's*! what could

could these have done, without your assistance? I have but one reason for asking that question, and I desire no other, it is so full to the purpose; “They were in being before you wrote your book; what did they do then?”

In short, when I reflect upon this, I know not, whether I am more chagrined or surprised to observe, that your singular merit has past unregarded by the H--se of C-----ns on this occasion; who, whilst they have been so liberal in v-t-ng thanks to many inferior actors, have never taken the least notice of the *A-th-r* of the *Est-m-te*; though he appears, so clearly, to have been the main-spring, which put the whole machine in motion.

As far as this omission can be supplied by the voice of a single person, I beg leave, in this public manner, to offer you my most humble congratulations on the great success of your writings, — hoping, that no neglect of others

thers will deprive us of the still greater benefit to be expected from your larger Work. I beg leave to subscribe myself,

With all the due deference,

and distance,

Which a poor humble monosyllable,

at the bottom of one of your own pages,

observes towards it's superiors,

Yours.

AN
EXPLANATION
OF THE
DESIGN of this ESTIMATE,
ADDRESSED
To the Reverend and Learned
The DEAN of LINCOLN.

SIR,

I Know no piece of vanity more common, or which perhaps is more excusable (especially when we are got amongst strangers) than to pretend an acquaintance with a person of some consequence, who is generally known, and thought well of. We cannot help flattering ourselves with the hopes, that they, in whose company we are engaged, will immediately ascribe a part of his worth to us; and that by this means we shall appear to them, in a more respectable point of view: neither can it be doubted, but that if the business be properly managed, a prepossession may be thus raised in our favor, which will serve, like a letter recommendatory;

tory ; at least, till we, by some misconduct, have destroyed it's good effect, and betrayed our own unworthiness.

The reason, which induced me to make use of your Name on this occasion, I need only tell to *you*, for every body else will see of course, that it was an affectation of the above sort: I knew you to be one, who was a friend to learning, and indeed to every thing, that is worthy ; I was therefore willing to have it thought, that you were a friend to me.

But how far I can have any pretence to your friendship in this instance, is only to be seen by my declaring the design, I have in view, and those considerations, which gave rise to it.

The End then proposed in the present treatise, which I have ventured to lay before you and the public, Is, first of all, “ To vindicate the ways of God to men,” by opening to their view, in some degree, a regular plan of his proceedings with them ; from which I hope to make it appear, that there has been a continual *Tendency to the better* in all human affairs. The manner, in which I have attempted to do this, is by making the fairest Estimate, I could, both of those

Prin-

Principles, under which mankind seem to have acted at different periods of their existence; and also of those *Manners*, which have characterised the several ages of the world.

Another part of my design is, “To enlarge men’s notions a little,” by offering to their consideration a set of free and liberal sentiments, though not always immediately tending to the above principal point.

Lastly, I have endeavoured to draw a fairer picture of the *Present Times*, than that, offered to the public in *a late Estimate*: not that I mean to enter into any particular examination, either of the candor or abilities shewn in that work: an inquiry of that sort, “might justly be regarded, as a research rather curious, than necessary; since” (as the author well observes, pag. 203,) *a single reflection on the present state of the kingdom may seem to stand in the place of a thousand proofs,”* That the Doctor was ———
MISTAKEN.

Men are welcome, provided they allow the design to be good, to say, if they think so, that the execution is not answerable. I am not so solicitous about their opinion in this respect, as in the other: the one I could not well remedy; the other I easily might:

and I know, that you and all candid judges; who are convinced of the good intention, will make all proper allowances, for the method of pursuing it. As to the fastidious and critical reader, whose supreme pleasure may consist in the discovery of mistakes and inaccuracies, I shall not trouble myself to bespeak his clemency and indulgence by the common pleas of hurry, avocations, &c; since I have, in all probability, consulted his satisfaction more, by affording materials for his fault-finding observation to employ itself upon, than I could have done, by any other means whatever.*

Many things, I am sensible, are but slightly touched upon, which might have deserved a fuller disquisition. Others, perhaps, have been dwelt upon even to satiety and disgust: whilst many more, which may be thought to have some connexion with this inquiry, have been intirely omitted. This however is seemingly the case with most
books

* As I believe myself to be the first, who ever made use of this plea, in favor of bad writing, I expect to be allowed the full benefit of it, during my fourteen years property in this book; and if I ever write another, I hope it will either stand less in need of an excuse; or that I shall have found out, by that time, a better.

books published; and may therefore possibly be pardoned in one, consisting of such various materials, as the present; especially by those, who consider, what a trouble it is even to write a very indifferent book; and, that this trouble is usually undertaken, either for their pleasure or profit; however the author may be deceived in his expectation. I have, in particular, entered very sparingly into modern politics: for whatever inclination I might have, as an *Englishman*, to gratify the reader on this subject; I found, that by having lived at a distance from the WORLD, though books might have furnished me with some general notions, I should descend to particulars with an awkwardness, which would only expose me to the ridicule of men, acquainted with AFFAIRS.*

With regard to the liberty I have taken of throwing a part of my sentiments into
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* It is to be hoped however, that this frank confession, will not subject me to the *sad* mortification of having it retorted upon me; that, for the same reason, I should have omitted many other particulars. Indeed, gentle reader, however I may be mistaken, these particulars were *only* inserted, because they seemed to fall, if not more within my reach, at least more within that province, of which I have assumed the cognisance, than the others.

the form of notes, it was done principally for my own ease; but with a distant view, at the same time, to that of the reader; who, if he is satisfied with what he meets with in the text, need not trouble himself with looking into the notes: but, if in any matter he requires farther information, he may perhaps sometimes find it in that part, which is printed in a smaller character, in order to save the trouble of connexion, and at the same time avoid embarrassment. I have besides, now and then, when I thought myself most open to the force of banter, endeavoured to fly for refuge to a note; with what success, can only be known from the event.

As to the plan, by which I suppose Providence to have acted; it is not offered to the public, much less to you, Sir, as any new discovery, arising from my own reason or observation: I own this with the greater pleasure; as it has been already so much better recommended to people's attention, by the name and writings of a far more able advocate:* whose excellent Discourse on *The Progress of Natural Religion and Science*, whoever reads with sufficient attention, will have no need to come here for farther conviction;

* Dr. Law, Master of St. Peter's College, Cambridge.

Design of this Estimate. vii

viction; nor would he, I am afraid, find it, if he did. However as * light troops are of use in war, as well as the more regular and embodied soldiery; so may it also perhaps be of service, in the defence of truth, to pursue sometimes a looser or less disciplined method, as well as a closer and more correct way of reasoning.

The end proposed is certainly such a one, as every thinking man must be heartily desirous of seeing satisfactorily made out: to all of whom it cannot but have been matter of frequent concern, to reflect upon the many incongruous, absurd, and unworthy notions; which have, from time to time, and from one end of the earth to the other, been entertained of the Deity, and his dealings with his creatures, — so derogatory to his honor, and detrimental to their happiness! not only by the unenlightened *Indian*, who boils and bakes the object of his worship; and

* I am well aware, that these troops cut but a poor figure, in “The famous battle, fought some years ago in *St. James’s* library;” but either nature or fate impelled me so strongly, that I could not help enlisting into this very corps. — I must therefore patiently submit to all the ridicule, which my conduct justly deserves.

and whom therefore one can more readily allow to think, what he pleases, of his own workmanship; but by the more rational heathen: not only by the *Monks* and *Copti's*; but by the more informed part of the christian world; — who have seemingly taken all the pains they could, to make “The religion of God of none effect;” — who have labored, one should think, only to establish the truth of that prophecy of our Saviour, “That he was not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword;” — who, as if the religion, which he taught, had been incomplete, have been ever busy in supplying it's defects by absurd additions of their own; “brick, straw, stubble!” which have been put together with what, in every sense of the word, may be justly called “untempered mortar;” — who have been continually disputing and fighting for formularies and creeds, for what men should believe, without troubling their heads about what they practised. — Nay, of so much greater importance have they judged the first of these articles to be, than the latter; that, in order to teach men to believe, what they could either never know at all, or least never know to be right; they have suffered, or rather indeed

indeed taught, them to do, what they could not but know to be wrong.

By these means, whilst opposite sides have been contending for the right of prescribing to each other's consciences; frequently in matters, with which the consciences of neither had any thing at all to do; religion, that is, every thing, which deserves that name, has lain, like a litigated estate, neglected by both parties; and in consequence of that, instead of it's genuine fruits, when properly cultivated, righteousness and peace; has produced all the evil weeds of envy, rancour, malice, and revenge.

At one time, as if the Deity could not be good; unless men were bad; a great deal of pains has been taken to represent us, as a set of unnatural, mishapen monsters, all vileness and deformity,—contrary to the express word of God himself; who has declared, that whatever he created, “was very good;” which surely we never can look upon, as the temporary applause of a day only. It would be a piece of cunning of so low a kind, that we should hardly pardon it in the meanest artificer; who, knowing, that his workmanship would certainly fall in pieces to-morrow, should seize the present moment to

set off and exalt his extraordinary performance. How shall men dare then to ascribe any thing, like this, to the Author of all truth and perfection !

At another time, as if men could not be good, unless the Deity were bad ; the kind, beneficent Father of mankind has been represented, as their great enemy and destroyer ; has been dressed in all the fiery robes of burning indignation, and armed with terror and relentless fury !

How far such representations might be necessary in the grosser ages of the world, one cannot well pretend to determine : neither would it be easy to say, whether they might not even still be usefully applied to the lower class of mankind ; whose dull mind is incapable of being much affected by any generous or exalted ideas ; and who cannot receive any lasting impressions, but from objects, which strike the senses : this however one may safely venture to affirm, that the bawling methodist, who pours forth storms of hail, fire and brimstone, upon the ignorant, gaping, and affrighted multitude, that attend him, and greedily drink in his precious instructions, is more justifiable, than the learned divine, who endeavours, in his

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labored volumes, to impose an absurd belief on the more rational part of mankind.

But what will not a blind attachment to systems do? In order to procure esteem and veneration for certain human establishments, of worth and excellency enough, considered merely as such; men have industriously taken pains, and have unhappily succeeded in their endeavours, to make them be looked upon, as essential parts of christianity itself; which strange proceeding has brought with it this very natural consequence, besides many others equally awkward; that, by its means, the cause of our holy religion, and the decrees of councils and synods, (two extremely different things!) have been put upon the same issue;—from whence we may justly derive no small part of that scepticism and infidelity, which has lately deluged a neighbouring kingdom, and has flowed even hither:—for men, having been taught to look upon the church of Christ and his Religion to be the same thing, and having been able to discover some flaws in the former, have too hastily concluded, that the same might be met with in the latter.

Things however are not quite so bad amongst us; may we duely thank God for it!

it! — that spirit of gentleness and tolerancy in our church, — that great moderation in claiming no absolute authority over men's consciences, in matters of belief, has secured us from a great part of this mischief: — but even we, I doubt, have been in some degree blameable.

That the christian religion at large is calculated to promote the good of mankind in general, is not perhaps more true, than that particular modes of it are peculiarly suited, to advance the happiness of particular sets of men, united together, under certain laws, in the same society: — wherever then the wisdom of Lawgivers has been such, as to model the religion of a country in such a manner, as may best suit the frame of government, there established; (provided there be in it nothing directly contrary to the doctrine of Christ,) and experience has shewn, that it is peculiarly adapted to the genius of the inhabitants, and circumstances of the kingdom; men can scarce too strenuously labor to inculcate a love and esteem for this form of worship among the people.

Yet, if they go so far as to make them believe the worth of it consists intirely in a par-

particular determined form of prayer, or in certain indifferent rites and ceremonies; this inconvenience will attend their zeal, — that (if afterwards, either by a change of circumstances; by the governments having undergone some alteration; or by a farther insight into things, it should be discovered, that some amendments might be made in this form of worship,) there will be found such an attachment in the common people to their old forms, that it would be extremely hazardous to risque an innovation; as ninety-nine out of a hundred of these would fancy, you were rooting up religion itself.

So that in time, when, by such alterations, as the wisdom of succeeding ages would discover to be for the better, the civil government was become more and more perfect and complete; the established religion, which should have kept pace with it, will be the most *imperfect thing in it, and perhaps

* Just as the holy Scriptures are likely to become the most incorrect books amongst us, by that absurd position, that even the words of them, being dictated, nay the very fingers of the penmen, who transcribed them, being guided, by unerring inspiration, they cannot admit of the ordinary rules of criticism.

haps hardly suitable to it in its present form.

There is more meaning in that distinction of HIGH CHURCH and *Low Church*, so bandied about in a late reign, than there is in most other distinctions, which were then, or have been since, in use among us. What the learned *Montesquieu* observes, of the popish religion being suited to absolute monarchies, and the protestant to those, where liberty is established by law, is true in some degree of the different forms of protestantism itself; so that in a kingdom, where the prerogative of the crown has been gradually lessened, and liberty better secured, some high-flown notions in Church policy might possibly be lowered for the better.

But what then? Are we quietly to sit still, and patiently to hear the cavils of every novice, who pretends to find fault with what he cannot mend? Not so neither. All that is here meant is only to recommend it, as a point of prudence, to lessen, as much as we can, the number of those things, that lie open to the attempts of our adversaries.

By keeping up, more for show, than any real use, large and extensive outworks, many of which are at best capable of but a weak de-

defence, we do in some sort endanger or expose the citadel itself; since our enemies will be forward to interpret every slight advantage, which they may accidentally gain against one of these, as if it affected the main body. Whereas, by voluntarily surrendering some of the most advanced and least tenable posts, our attention in defending the rest would be less distracted; and these, by being nearer to the main work, against which, we are told, “the most fiery darts of our worst enemy shall never be able to prevail,” would receive shelter from, as well as give strength to, it.

However it may be said, that it is not only the private œconomy of a particular Church, which is called in question; but that even the great general dispensations of Providence itself are daringly attacked. Notwithstanding the reprehension in the Gospel, “Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?” Men have ever made it their practice, and it scarce can be doubted, but that they ever will continue to inquire, why they were made, as they are; and indeed with some shew of reason too, provided they can bring themselves to think, that their cir-
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cumstances and accommodations are not so good, as they might have been: the impious ridicule upon Providence, implied in the answer of the *Dervise* in * *Candide*, would otherwise have too much foundation; “Thinkest thou, says he, when his
 “sublime Highness sends a vessel to *Egypt*,
 “that he concerns himself at all, whether
 “the Mice on board have room or not?”
 “What would you have one do then,
 “said *Pangloss*?” “Hold your tongue, said
 “the *Dervise*.”

Let us see rather, what it is, which these complainers would have; and how far it may appear to have been in the power of their Creator to satisfy them. To speak according to the narrowness of our ideas, there seems
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* The Author of this profane piece of burlesque, has raked together all the little circumstances, that seem to throw a shade upon God's moral government, many of which arise merely from the necessary imperfection of human governments and institutions; and even these he has been mean enough to misrepresent: by such low artifice has he attempted to laugh us out of the belief of a divine superintendency: his attempt would have been just as wise, had he endeavoured to prove, that the Sun did not shine, because an accidental cloud or eclipse may sometimes intervene, and for a while intercept a part of it's brightness from our view.

to have been only two things in the choice of the Deity, when he determined to create Mankind; either to place them in a certain subordinate degree of happiness, with powers to promote themselves to higher degrees; or to have given them the highest possible happiness at once: which last, it is likely, is the very thing, which they, who are dissatisfied with their present condition, long for; but which, if carefully attended to, will perhaps be found to be an impossible case; for it seemingly implies a contradiction, even for infinite power itself to make any positive degree of happiness, how great soever, the greatest possible,—between what is infinite, and the next step to it, there must always be an immeasurable void, which will ever afford room for the supposition of going farther and farther, without coming at all to any determinate end:—so that the only way, which our beneficent Creator had of communicating the greatest happiness to his Creatures, was by setting no bounds to it, but allowing us to go on from one degree to another, in an endless progression. Had the Deity placed us in any fixed, determined degree of happiness, with understanding enough to see, that there might be higher degrees,

grees, we should have been losers by this appointment.

If it be still said, that, even allowing this progressive state to be the best, we might have set out from a higher step in the scale; it might be answered, that wherever the first step was taken, there would lie the same matter of complaint against it, as against the present.

In fact, if we were to be placed in a state of morality; that is, in such a state, as to be able, by our own choice, to become the authors of our own happiness or misery; such an allotment of things, as at present obtains, seems in some sort necessary; where the balance is pretty near equally suspended: so that there should be no great force upon the will, or prepollency in favor of one side, more than the other.— All that is wanting, or can be desired in such a state, is, that the proportion of good may appear so sufficiently above the bad, that we may with reason conclude, the Deity had our happiness in view at creation: — and if it should be farther evident, that this happiness is growing daily greater; we have the fairest argument, which analogy can afford, that it will continue for ever to do so: which is also greatly strengthened by that stretch-and
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tendency, which every one must experience in his mind, to get forward; by that appetency after future things, that grasping after happiness, that lies still beyond our reach; which certainly was never implanted in our nature merely to mock and disappoint us.

The case however of those, who may abuse their liberty of choice to their own destruction, may still seem to stand in our way: if the number of these should be greater, or indeed bear any considerable proportion to those, who use their freedom rightly; it may afford some plausible matter for objection to those, who would impeach the goodness of their Maker, — as if he had acted contrary to that goodness, in placing his creatures in such precarious circumstances, as he must know before-hand would prove the occasion of falling to so many.

Now we may observe by the way, that in whatever circumstances the Deity had placed us; unless he had made us mere necessary agents, (if such two terms can agree) a possibility of falling must ever have been annexed to our condition: — and “as all scripture is written for our admonition,” perhaps the story of *Adam* in paradise, and that of the fallen Angels too might both be
c delivered

delivered with this view, to inform us, that we might have forfeited our happiness, however innocent we were at first, or how high soever, in the scale of Beings, our rank had been assigned us.

But still that God should create any Beings upon such terms, as that many of them should become infinitely and eternally miserable, may not seem so easy to be got over; or reconciled to our notions of his goodness.

This indeed is a *hard saying*; and, unless the scriptures be absolute in enjoining the belief of it, “who would willingly receive it?” When one considers, how very few of our actions are in themselves grossly sinful; how almost all of them borrow their heinous quality, merely from their being detrimental to the happiness of our fellow-creatures; which God was willing by all means to secure: and when one farther considers, for how small a pittance of time the worst of our actions, even murder itself, (which seems to be the highest crime we are capable of committing,) will probably interrupt the happiness of our brother; our reason reluctantly concludes, that the punishment of sin will be strictly eternal. — That there should be a distinction made hereafter between
the

the good and bad; and that the latter should be punished for their misdeeds; reason, scripture, every thing, calls aloud for: —but humanity enforces us to wish, that all suffering may tend to the reformation of the sufferers; and that, even in punishment, “God would remember mercy!”

It is easy to reply to this way of talking, that it proceeds rather from conscious guilt and fearful apprehensions, than from unprejudiced conclusions: but surely it is better even to err that way, than for human arrogance to lift itself so high, as impiously to condemn men with more rigour, than God has condemned them, and daringly to consign over to everlasting perdition those, whom God may have created to be ultimately happy: — surely he who has goodness enough to declare himself willing, that “None should perish, but that all should be saved,” has also wisdom enough to contrive the means of this, though they are fitly hid from us at present.

Perhaps, if it had received any countenance from scripture, something like the doctrine of *Pythagoras* would have easily recommended itself to our belief: for, that nothing, which has once tasted the blessing

of existence, will ever intirely cease to be, is a principle highly agreeable to our reason; as we cannot well conceive any other motive for it's first creation, than the Deity's willing it to be happy: and as there is "no variableness, nor shadow of turning in him;" we might therefore conclude, that the same motive would ever retain it's full force.

Supposing then existence not to be lost, of what import can it be, (provided this is not brought about by any sinful act,) that it's course may accidentally be diverted into another channel, where it will flow on with less interruption?

Beings of a day, as we are, can form but imperfect notions of such vast designs, as are and have been, the business of eternity. Notwithstanding our boasted privilege of *looking before and after*; all, we can clearly see, is just the narrow spot, that lies around us; one scene perhaps, or less of the great drama, in which "all mankind are merely players, as the poet calls them, who have their exits and their entries;" and it matters not at all, whether one man has a longer part in this scene than another, as they will both so soon quit it to enter on the next: and we must stay the concluding

ing act to know, whether exact poetic justice has been done or not; enough for us, if we can in the mean time learn from what has past, what is most likely to be hereafter: if we can see just a distant opening of the plot, enough to lead us to guess with probability at the Catastrophe.

If then from those parts, which have been already acted, we can discover *a Tendency to the better* in things; we may rest satisfied, and safely conclude, that they will for ever go on in the same way. And that there is such a *tendency*, will, it is hoped, appear from the following Estimate. Not but it must be owned, there are many intricacies, which embarrass this plan: — though perhaps no difficulty, which stands in the way, is so hard to be got over, as to persuade people to think as well of those things, of which “familiarity, according to the old proverb, has bred a contempt,”* as of those, which they only there-

* To use a familiar instance; how hardly do we bring ourselves to think, that Tom, Dick, or Harry, whom we remember boys, are grown even to be men; much more men of any consequence? Unless, by some means, they have been removed, for a time, from our sight and observation. And if it may be allowable to add an instance of much higher importance;

therefore admire, because they cannot see clearly, what they are.

I am afraid, Sir, you will look upon this Address, as already carried to too great a length; yet, before I conclude it, I must beg leave to observe, that whatever becomes of the argument, when extended to the world at large; it must affect every lover of science, and friend to this place, with the sincerest pleasure to think, that it is most strictly true, when applied to the state of this University: which is not more visibly improved in the outward appearance of it's structures and public buildings, than in the learning and manners of it's inhabitants. The minds of youth were never taught to think with a more becoming freedom; the only way, by which they can be taught to think right; or more strongly impressed with lively sentiments of true christian humanity; that is, a proper consideration of
their

tance; we know, that the greatest character, which ever adorned human nature, found no honor in his own country: "Is not this the carpenter's son; are not his brethren and his sisters with us?" were arguments enough to induce men to believe, that he ought not to pretend to know more, than they did. On the other hand, how easily, and how constantly, are we bubbled by any foreign impostor? — But these considerations, belong more properly to another place.

their own and other people's happiness; which probably constitutes both the end and means of all true religion; and seems to be the only impression, which, consistently with a free use of reason, can be stamped upon the mind, before it has attained the power of judging for itself. In consequence of this, there never was a time, when this *nursing* MOTHER of science could boast of so many sons, who were possessed of so much real and useful knowledge, or who practised more rational or more civilized manners; especially among that part of them, who by their birth and fortune throw a splendor and dignity upon learning; who always should endeavour, and who usually have it in their power, to make a greater progress in science, than others: these have lately in a more particular manner made it their study to excel in this, as they already do in all other advantages.*

Without

* It certainly is much to be wished, that the plan of education here were so enlarged, (if it could be consistently with the main end of our institution, the sending out into the world an able supply of men for the sacred Ministry,) as to induce young men of family and fortune to reside longer amongst us, than for the two or three early years, which usually bound their stay here. How much better

Without entering more minutely into the causes of this, we might appeal for a confirmation of the truth of it to every one, who is at all acquainted with our situation; whatever some, who live at a * distance, have, on that account, imagined to the contrary.

“ With
would this be, both for the community and themselves, than to have them almost under a necessity of going to some foreign University; where, however they may learn a more polite address, or other such like accomplishments, they certainly cannot learn more true knowledge?

* We might therefore easily be excused from giving any particular answer to them, if they had not received one already.† But at the same time, it must be owned, that a person of much greater consequence, than they; even the great Lord *Bacon*, who was in fact, what he, with more compliment, than truth, said of *Plato*, “ *Vir sublimis ingenii, qui-
“ que veluti ex rupe excelsâ omnia circumspicie-
“ bat,*” has bent his thoughts toward our institutions, and has left us the following observation upon them: “ *Defectus etiamnum alius nobis observan-
“ dus, magni certè momenti, neglectus quidam est,
“ in Academicarum rectoribus, consultationis; in re-
“ gibus sive superioribus, visitationis; in hunc fi-
“ nem, ut diligenter consideretur et perpendatur,
“ utrum prælectiones, disputationes, aliaque exer-
“ citia scholastica, antiquitus instituta et ad nostra
“ usque tempora usitata, continuare fuerit ex usu,
“ vel potius antiquare, aliaque meliora substituere.
“ Etenim inter Majestatis tuæ (Jacobi 1^{mi}) canones
“ prudentissimos illum reperio. In omni vel consue-
“ tudine.*

† See *Observations on the Present state of the English Universities, Occasioned by Dr. Davies's Account of the Education in them.*

With what gratitude then must we needs look upon those, who, by their liberality and

*“tudine vel exemplo, tempora spectanda sunt, quando
“primum res capta: in quibus si vel confusio regna-
“verit vel inscitia, derogat illud imprimis auctoritati
“rerum, atque omnia suspecta reddit. Quamobrem,
“quandoquidem Academiarum instituta plerum-
“que originem traxerint a temporibus hisce nostris
“haud paulo obscurioribus, et indoctioribus; eo
“magis convenit, ut examini denuo subjiciantur.”*

How far this might be intended to flatter that pedantic Monarch, of whose wisdom we have a specimen here given us, and who was always fond of having a hand in every thing, that related to religion or learning, may perhaps be difficult to determine: but that, what is said, is founded in truth, can admit of no dispute. Time, and the prudence of more modern Ages, may, and no doubt have greatly lessened the number of those things, which were formerly liable to exception. Yet he might be suspected of having more partiality, than sincere judgement, who should undertake to say, that nothing of this sort was now to be found amongst us. However it may best become us to leave these matters to the consideration of those, to whom the above-cited, great Author committed them. If, in the mean time, a private person may be indulged a wish upon the subject; mine should be, that the way to *Natural Knowledge* was rendered a little more easy amongst us, by having a supply given us of such things, as our slender incomes ill enable us to purchase ourselves. Our Schools should be furnished with good apparatus's for observations and experiments. Ample Stipends should be allotted to our Professors of Anatomy, Chemistry, and Botany; the whole to be forfeited on their ceasing to read Lectures, which

and attention to our welfare, have afforded the means of these improvements ; especially on

should all be *Gratis*. And a Laboratory should be established, and endowed with a sufficient revenue to pay inferior Operators for their attendance, and also for supplying proper utensils and materials for going through a course of Chemistry ; where every one of the University, whose turn led him that way, might have free access to make, what trials he pleased. What would have made another part of this wish is already, it seems, in a fair way of being answered by our being upon the point of having a Physic Garden established, through the munificence of a very worthy Member of this place, Dr. *Walker of Trinity College*. And we already by a former benefaction have an exceeding good collection of Fossils, and a handsome appointment for a Lecturer.

It might not be absurd perhaps to add the following wish to the former, though about a matter of much less consequence ; — That all our public Disputations, were carried on in our own Language, and in a less confined way than that of syllogisms. People would blush at that nonsense, when cloathed in plain *English*, which assumes an air of importance, and even challenges respect, when dressed in very indifferent *Latin*. We might too, by this means, learn in time to talk in our own Tongue, with ease and elegance, instead of mangling and maiming another, which, at last, we shall speak but very imperfectly.

Wishes however, I am sensible are, at best, both exceeding slow Benefactors, and to the full as idle Reformers ! Possibly too, many a prudent man may shake his head at such empty things, as visionary projectors only dream of ; and many a good one may satisfy himself, that there cannot be much reformation wanting in those institutions, which have
always

on one great * Man, who has long been the liberal encourager and patron of every thing, which

always hitherto answered the ends, they were designed for : whilst many more may fancy, that it does not much signify, how such places, as these, are ordered, or regulated : — that the great matter is, to bring Men of letters together, who, like *Bees*, will do all the rest, that is expected from them of course,

Principio sedes Apibus, statioque petenda,

Quo neque sit ventis aditus, &c.

Now this may be, and probably is the principal thing; when you have already got Men of letters fit, and prepared to enter upon their several different pursuits and employments ; just as we see it happen, about the Capitals of Kingdoms and other large Cities ; where, without any other encouragement, than the mere friendly intercourse of Arts and Sciences with each other, the greatest progress in Learning is daily made. But the question at present is, how we shall be most likely to raise men of Learning, — whether by following that method, which was chalked out to us in very ignorant Ages, when almost all the knowledge in the world was shut up in *Greek* and *Latin*, and was only to be acquired by a previous insight into their idioms, and phrases ; or whether we should look out for some new one now, when circumstances are intirely changed ; and not go on to waste the best part of our time and attention in gaining an acquaintance with those Languages, which, when understood, will not furnish us with half the knowledge to be met with in our own ; not but, however it's use may cease, it must always continue to be matter of the highest entertainment, as well as ornament too to the Scholar, to be able to read the wisdom of former Ages, in those Languages, in which it was originally wrote.

* Our CHANCELLOR.

which might tend to raise the reputation of this our *Athens*?

After these, they claim the next share of our praise, by whose prudent management, the beneficence of others has been made to answer the end, it was designed for: amongst the first of which number, the DEAN of LINCOLN's Name, if I should omit it, cannot fail to be reckoned by every body else.

I am,

SIR,

Your most obliged,

and most obedient,

humble Servant,

CAMBRIDGE,
March 20. 1760.

The AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

PART. I.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAP. II.

In which some Reasons are assigned, Why men have been so generally of Opinion, "that the world has been growing worse," and their fallacy shewn. p. 7.

CHAP. III.

Containing some Other Reasons to the same purpose. p. 17.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Evil Tendency of this Opinion, and the Mischief They do, Who encourage it. p. 33.

CHAP. V.

In which some Other Opinions are considered. p. 39.

PART

CONTENTS.

PART II.

CHAP. I.

*A General View of what is proposed in the
Second Part.* P. 49.

CHAP. II.

*A Proof, "that Arts and Sciences must have
"been Improving," drawn from the nature
of the thing.* P. 53.

CHAP. III.

*The same Proposition proved from a consideration
of the places, where Arts have flourished.* p. 59.

CHAP. IV.

*Of the Evidence, which History gives to the above
particulars.* P. 63.

CHAP. V.

*A General Comparison between Ancient and
Modern Learning.* P. 75.

CHAP. VI.

*Some Particulars, which are likely to be dis-
puted.* P. 78.

CHAP. VII.

*Of Language, and those parts of Science, which
depend more immediately upon it, such as
Rhetoric, Poetry, &c.* p. 80.

CHAP.

C O N T E N T S.

C H A P. VIII.

*Some General Observations on Ancient and
Modern Learning.* p. 101.


C H A P. IX.

Of the Art of War. p. 104.

C H A P. X.

Of Religion, considered as a Science. p. 108.

ADVERTISEMENT.

 *What is here offered to the public makes only a part of the Author's Design: but this being his first Introduction to the Reader, he was not willing to make the visit of Ceremony too long. — Speedily however will be published Parts the third and fourth of this Estimate, on the Happiness and Virtue of Mankind; in which Mr. Rousseau's opinions will be particularly considered: and Part the fifth, which will be an Application of the whole to our own Times and Circumstances.*

A NEW
ESTIMATE
OF
MANNERS and PRINCIPLES.

PART I.

IN WHICH
Some common Opinions and Prejudices
are considered.

Most humbly,
and most dutifully,
inscribed

to Him who deserves the following Compliment,
more than ever *Cæsar* did.

*Sed Tuus hoc populus sapiens et justus in uno
Te nostris ducibus, Te Graiis anteferendo,
Cætera nequaquam simili ratione modoque
Æstimat ; et nisi quæ terris semota, suisque
Temporibus defuncta videt, fastidit et odit.*

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A NEW
ESTIMATE
OF
MANNERS and PRINCIPLES.

CHAP. I.
INTRODUCTION.

IT has now been so long the practice to cry up the excellence of former times, and to lament modern degeneracy, that an attempt to introduce a different rule of judging must expect to meet with no very favorable reception. Opinions of long establishment in the world, like old customs, acquire so much sanctity, that whoever does not pay the most reverential regard to them, is sure to be looked upon with an eye of jealousy and distrust, as if he were intending no good to mankind.

They especially, who, being either unable or unwilling to judge for themselves, suit

their opinions, as they do their clothes, to the fashion of the times, are apt to be exceedingly alarmed at any innovation; which, considering the small trouble an alteration of this sort can cost them, one would hardly expect: but true and genuine prejudice, being, both by nature and habit, nearly related to the old carrier's horse, will for ever follow the bells of it's leader; and is so accustomed to plod on, at the same dull rate, and in the same miry path, after others; that it is odds, but it will, right obstinately, kick at him, who shall pretend to direct it better, or to interfere at all with it's sacred, hereditary right of going on, unmolested, in the wrong itself; and of leading as many after it, as it can, into the same mistakes.

Indeed I am not well satisfied, how far it is either right for one man to interrupt another in the quiet possession of his opinion, or reasonable to expect a peaceable submission in this case. For there grows up such a tender connexion between the mind and a favorite notion, once received, that the most ingenuous frequently find a strong reluctance against parting with it.

But

But certainly if ever this be right or reasonable, it is so, when a change will manifestly be for the better ; when we attempt to disperse the gloom of melancholy and superstition, and in it's stead open to the mind a more agreeable prospect. Neither can it be unwarrantable, one should think, with such an end in view, especially when there is likely to be no small degree of prejudice against us, should we endeavour to raise a little favorable partiality on our own side. One may surely venture therefore, without being suspected of dealing unfairly, to suggest, at setting out, that it is much more a man's interest to think well of present times and circumstances, in which his own lot of life is cast, than of any past period, in which he can have no concern ; and that every one, who desires to be happy, should wish at least, it might be true, that he was more likely to be so now, than he could have been, had he lived at any other time.

They, however, who see and think for themselves, and do not take their opinions from others, as they find them ready made up by the voice of the generality, will have no need of such a wish to help them forward

in concluding, “ That the world is, and has been continually from the first notice we have of it, in a state of improvement, with regard to every thing, that can be thought to raise or dignify our nature ; and that consequently, it is now in all respects of that sort, better than it ever was before :” to all such as these, a clear state of matter of fact and fair deduction from it, will, I make no doubt, evidently evince this truth.

But as the number of such men is very small, and as the contrary opinion, from the long possession it has had of their minds, may have left some ill impressions even on those, who are the best disposed to receive truth ; it may not, perhaps, be amiss, before we proceed to a more direct inquiry into this subject, to bestow a little time in tracing out those causes, which have given rise to the common notion, “ That virtue, and with it happiness, the arts, and in short, every thing which gives a grace and dignity to life, has long been upon the decline.”

CHAP. II.

In which some reasons are assigned, why men have been so generally of opinion, that the world has been growing worse, and their fallacy shewn.

ONE of the principal reasons for this opinion seems to have been the unfair comparison, which is usually made between present virtues and vices, and those which are past.

Do we not hear of more vices being practised now than formerly were, and fewer virtues? is a question, which almost every one is ready to ask: and from thence it is an easy step to the conclusion, “That consequently the manners of men are plainly in a state of degeneracy;” which, if need were, there is the authority of a * Poet ready at hand

* Who is now one of those venerable ancients, to whom such an universal homage is paid: who however, when he himself was a modern, did not seem much inclin’d to pay it to his predecessors; at least, if he gave up to them the point of virtue, he was by no means disposed to resign the praise of learning also; as we may see from those lines of his quoted at the beginning of this Essay, and others from the same place.

hand to confirm, who thus complains of injurious time,

Damnosa quid non imminuit dies?

Ætas parentum, pejor avis, tulit

Nos nequiores, mox daturos

Progeniem vitiosorem.

If the world has been really making a continual progress to greater degrees of perfection, how is it possible, that men should so far overlook it's advances, as to think and say, it has been daily growing worse? In what light are we to look upon those improvements, which so far from becoming matter of common observation, have not been visible enough to prevent a conclusion, which intirely overthrows the very supposition of their existence?

This may pass with some for very plausible arguing; but it will be found, perhaps, on due inquiry, to have in fact no other foundation than this; we feel the ill effects of present vices, and therefore they excite in us strong emotions of indignation; whereas we can look at those, which are past, as unmoved, as we are unhurt by them.

Neither let any one think it a sufficient reply to this, to say, " That for the same
reason

reason we should estimate also at a higher rate present virtues, as we are in like manner immediately sensible of their good effects:” which if we did, it must be owned, we should still keep the balance fair and even. But unluckily, the *proposition which asserts, “That we are more strongly affected by what we see and feel, than by what we hear or read of, is only true in a partial respect;” as we shall find by attending to the different process, which virtue and vice make in our affections.

Actions, that shock us, do indeed affect us more by happening in our own time, in our own country, and in our own neighbourhood, than when they happen at a distance: as we are by this means made acquainted with many little circumstances, that increase our horror, but yet are too trivial for history or relation to particularise, which generally give us things only in the gross. But it is not equally true, that those of a better kind affect us in the same manner. In the case of present vices we tremble for our friends,

* According to the same Poet,

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus —.*

friends, our families, and ourselves : and as scarce any one thinks himself concerned to extenuate their heinous quality, except the actors of them, or their associates, for whom it is usually dangerous too, and always of little consequence to appear in the defence ; they receive no alleviation, but such as time brings, which commonly blots out some of the worst circumstances attending them. People too, when the danger is over, begin with greater calmness to consider things, and make allowances ; till at length, crimes of the blackest hue lose their most frightful features, and appear with a softer aspect, and a fairer complexion.

The process is by no means the same with respect to good actions : as the former, when present, are more shocking ; so, in the same circumstances, the latter appear less striking. It has long ago been discovered, tho' not sufficiently attended to, “ That * virtue, instead of affording greater pleasure the nearer it comes to our view, has a strange kind of property to hurt the eye of the immediate beholder, and is scarce ever seen in it's full beauty and perfection, but through the medium

* *Virtutem incolumem odimus, &c. ———*
Urit enim fulgore suo, &c.

dium of history :” this gives a shape and roundness to it, which on account of the blaze it occasions, present beholders cannot so well distinguish.

Envy too, and a thousand other circumstances, such as party-quarrels and family-connexions, step in between the living man of worth, and his due commendation ; but, when he is once gone ; has removed the hated obstacle, which stood in his rival’s way to greatness ; to make him amends for their former niggardly and unwilling allowance of that honor, which his merits might have justly claimed, men are eager to heap even unmerited praises on his memory ; especially, as they are but too apt to hope, they shall by this means lessen the pretensions of those, who on the present stage are treading after him in the path of glory.

It is a cruel discouragement to the professors of virtue, the chief of whose rewards are placed at a distance, and are only to be come at through a road of difficulties ; that those which lie nearer, and should be given to animate them in their noble pursuits, are usually withheld, till they, who should receive them, are now become insensible of their worth. How much more reasonably

sonably should we act, how much more our interest, as well as duty, would it be, to bestow our praises on those, who are doing present credit, and present service to mankind, and who would be affected by them, than on those, who, however worthy they may have been, are long since lost to us, and to our praises too? *

But as things are too frequently managed, the man who endeavours to excel, who would attain to any distinguished eminence, instead of the animating voice of praise, will hear many a mortifying reflexion; instead of
any

* In this point of view how worthy of our regard and applause are they, who, by the appointment of premiums, or any other means, endeavour to excite a zeal for invention and improvement? The Worshipful the Society of Antiquarians must pardon me, if I say, that such a spirit is much more beneficial to mankind, than that of some others amongst us, who have seemingly taken a vow not to like any thing that is modern; but make it their constant business to shew, how much we are outdone in almost every thing by the ancients; the scattered reliques of whose knowledge they are daily busy in collecting: and pay as much adoration to them, as certain devotees do to reliques of another sort. Not but that even these men might do the world good service, would they, as they ought, be content, like the workmen at Herculaneum, with merely digging up the remains of ancient art, or representing them
fairly

any help to smoothe the rugged passage, and render his arduous attempt the easier, will find many an ugly rub, purposely thrown in his way; and, instead of any friendly hand stretched out to save him from the danger of a false step, will feel many an adverse push from those who stand around him; and who, being incapable of getting higher themselves, do therefore purposely place as many obstacles, as they can, in the way of others; hoping, by such means, to keep them down, if possible, even below the level of that situation, to which they themselves have with diffi-

fairly to others; and not think it necessary to despise the best productions of the modern scholar, or artificer, in comparison with a parcel of rusty trifles, and impaired worm-eaten nonsense, which is in fact just so much the better for not being more intire. One would almost be inclined to think, that they had understood *Lucretius* literally, and believed

duntaxat oriri
Posse ex non-sensu sensum,

so much more pleasure do they seem to take in giving a meaning to what had none before, than in reading what is plain and intelligible. But it is generally too true, that

— *Saliare Numæ carmen qui laudat, et illud*
Quod mecum ignerat, solus volt scire videri;
Ingeniis non ille favet plauditque sepultis,
Nestra sed impugnat, nos nostraque lividus odit.

difficulty clambered up; or, at least, to prevent their gaining any height above them.

It must indeed be owned, that the best of characters contain some blemishes, which a too narrow scrutiny may discover. There is a distance, at which real life should be look'd at, as well as it's copy on the canvass: we should know before-hand, that there are imperfections in the one, as well as in the other, which will not bear too near or too curious an examination; and we should therefore make the same allowances to both. The misfortune is, we are aware we shall destroy our pleasure, if we do not place the painting in the most advantageous point of view we can; whereas, I am afraid, it constitutes a part of that pleasure, to view the real man in his worst proportions: and for this, without going to the utmost severity of criticism, the too great nearness of all living characters affords too much opportunity.

But the case is altered, when history has taken the honors of the dead under it's protection: this, in * proportion as it is written

* Whoever reads a history, which takes in a considerable length of time, and will attend to the manner of drawing characters used at the different periods of it, will see this exemplified in a thousand instances;

ten at a farther distance from the time when a great man lived, clears off more and more of that obloquy and detraction which sullied his living glory. Those spots, which
seen

stances; he would see it in all, but that the historian has sometimes a private view, by saying more or less of an eminent man than he deserves, to favor some particular party or faction of his own times. All early accounts too (whether they relate to the world at large, or to the origin of particular kingdoms) being necessarily imperfect, and historians loving to give us things complete, the beginnings of almost all histories are but so many poetic fictions, calculated either to compliment that state which gave the Author birth, or to raise in us certain sublime notions of the grandeur and importance of human affairs, very different from what matter of fact would ever have suggested. This one of the most sensible antient historians expressly owns, "*Quæ ante conditam*" "*condendamve urbem, poeticis magis decora fabulis,*" "*quam incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis traduntur, ea nec affirmare, nec refellere,*" "*in animo est. Datur hæc venia antiquitati, ut miscendo humana divinis, primordia urbium augustiora faciat.*" And with how favorable a prepossession to antient times he himself sets out, may be collected from these and other words in his preface; "*Ego contra hoc quoque laboris præmium petam,*" "*uti me a conspectu malorum, quæ nostra tot per annos vidit ætas, transiper certè dum prisca illa*" "*tota mente repeto, avertam.*" And yet what worse combination of human actions could even imagination form, than that, which seems, even from his own account, to have gone towards the first establishment of Roman greatness?

seen too nearly, intercepted so much of his true brightness, in this new position gradually disappear; till at length, there is nothing left, but the fair and amiable picture of his virtue; which must always strike when viewed in it's true light: and if it has the farther good fortune to fall into a poet's hands, it is set off, and adorned with every grace, that may give it a superior lustre; with every stroke and touch of art, that may attract attention, or win admiration from all who see it.

It is from hence only, that we look for perfect characters in distant times and distant countries. — It is from hence only, that the illustrious heroes of our own time and country, admired and gazed at by all mankind beside; feared, and even honored by our enemies, are so long in gaining their just applause at home. — It is on this account, that the name of *George* or *William* does not raise in us an idea of so much greatness, as that of *Henry* or of *Edward* does; and even these great names themselves must, for the same reason, in their turn, yield to the superior sounds of *Scipio* and *Cæsar*.

C H A P. III.

Containing some other reasons to the same purpose.

TO the considerations, mentioned in the foregoing chapter, as likely to induce men to think worse of the present, and better of former times, than either might deserve; may be added the propensity, which there has ever been in old men, “to praise the times *passed*, when they were young,” and to prefer them to the present; the former of which may easily appear more agreeable to them, than the latter, without being so in fact; since the great difference is, most probably, only in themselves. They were then naturally disposed to think the best of every thing; their health and spirits gave a higher relish to their pleasures, which they had but few cares to interfere with; above attending to consequences, they enjoyed the present moment free from any impertinent interruption of thought and reflexion; ready to employ every idle hour (as the poet has it,) “With something new to wish, or to enjoy,” they would have little leisure, and still less inclination, to make any severe scrutiny into what might be amiss; indeed if they had

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both,

both, they must be extremely ill-qualified for the undertaking, having as yet had no opportunity for observation and comparifon, which alone could enable them to form any true judgement.

It is well, if age and infirmities have not altered their difpofition; it is well, if they be not now peevifh and fretful; hard to be pleafed; foon out of humor; rigid and fevere in their cenfures; which to juftify, they may be willing to have it thought, that fuch was the world in their time, it would have afforded no occafion for thefe complaints.

Or, to put the cafe more favorably for them, being now arrived to a nearer profpect of better pleafures, and having in a great meafure loft thofe paffions, which ftamped a value upon inferior enjoyments; it is no wonder, if they now begin to defpife thefe, which yet, they may remember, they once held in the higheft eftimation; and may therefore conclude, if they do not attend to what has paffed within themfelves in the mean time, that not they, but thefe are altered and abated in their worth. Which ever way it is, if we are at all influenced in forming our judgement by their authority, we fhall in all probability, make a wrong one;

as they are so very liable to be prejudiced in their representations.

We may farther take into this same account the universal practice of the Poets, which has ever been uniform in favor of early times; the necessary simplicity, frugality, and temperance of which, have been the finest subjects imaginable for them to display their fancy upon, when they had a mind to paint the virtues of mankind, and give us the picture of a golden age: whereas, on the other hand, all their satyr has necessarily been always pointed at times present; which, otherwise, would lose it's edge and poignancy.

It is for this reason, that the writers, of Farce and Comedy only, present us with living characters; whereas the Tragedians, and Epic poets travel in search of their's into the remotest antiquity: for, it being the business of the first to represent men, as they are, with a large mixture of imperfection always, and often of ridicule belonging to them; their end is best answered by giving us such descriptions, as are most suitable to what we daily see, and converse with. But the aim of the other being to represent men, as they neither do, nor ever did exist;

to give us certain complete patterns of virtue and perfection; they must needs endeavour to lay their scenes at as great a distance, as they can, that the improbability may not shock us too much by an immediate comparison; and the farther they get out of sight, for this reason, the better it is; for their characters being merely, or in a great measure, fictitious, if they did not throw them much into shade, the imposition would be too visible and glaring: being thus forced to have recourse to Antiquity, they have taken care amply to repay the assistance, they derived from it, by bestowing upon it in return the highest encomiums they could.

This however, we may observe, is as true of those we call Antients, as of the Moderns; for though *Aristophanes*, *Terence*, and *Moliere*, all present us with characters of the times, in which they wrote; yet *Sophocles* and *Euripides* no more describe the actions of living Heroes, than * *Shakespeare* or *Corneille*.

It

* Considered as a Tragedian.

And *Horace* was so convinced of the necessity of this practice, that, in his advice to the Tragedian, he lays it down for a rule,

*Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in Actus,
Quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus.*

That is, you had better take any ancient story for the subject of your play, than a modern event, which
may

It may be worth notice here, in passing, that though all these authors describe characters of past ages, yet they must be supposed to have drawn their ideas of those virtues, which they deck them out with, from the age, in which they themselves lived. If this be true, how infinitely do the moderns excel

may be yet in a great measure unknown to the generality of mankind, and has received no established reputation by being chronicled in the sacred page of history or poetry;— and he gives this reason for it,

Difficile est propriè communia dicere. —

Which with the leave of Critics, who have given a different interpretation of it, I would construe thus, “it is difficult to give a propriety or dignity to occurrences of common life,” however distressful, which have not yet been singled out, and set up for men to gaze and wonder at.

This is farther confirmed by another direction which he gives his young author, prefaced in the following manner,

*Siquid inexpertum scenæ committis, et audes
Personam formare novam, &c.* ———

in which he expresses as strongly, as he can, what a daring attempt it would be to form a new character: but what a dull business must the stage have become by this time, had nothing been represented there but tiresome repetitions of the *carmen Iliacum*; nothing but a lumber-headed *Ajax*, a bawling *Thersites*, or an *Achilles*, who must for ever have been just the same,

Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer!

cel the Ancients; through whose solemn scenes, there stalks a certain stubborn heroic kind of virtue, armed with a few principles of justice and moral rectitude, and attended by a set of stage decorums; but whose stern countenance banishes all those milder graces, that * affect the heart, that force the involuntary sigh, and teach the reluctant tear to flow?

* Neither let any one imagine, that their not affecting us is owing to the language, in which they are wrote: let the most learned professor in those languages translate them into the best modern English, and the effect will still be the same.

As they do not affect us much in the reading, so is it difficult to imagine, how they could affect people much more, in the way, in which they were acted. They, who have seen some of our best actresses, and have attended to the inimitable expression in a *Garrick's* features, will hardly see, how these could be equalled in the old way of acting; where men played women's parts, and all the characters were performed in masks. Besides, the largeness of their theatres must have destroyed all the soft and delicate inflexions of the voice. Neither can one easily conceive, how their chanting and musical accompaniments could supply these defects. Indeed it is but a poor opinion one can entertain of their attainments in this art: from any thing I have ever read or heard either of their music, or musical instruments, I should conclude, that if all the music in this Island, musical instruments, and musicians too, were sent in cargos, like the Jesuits, to his holiness the Pope; excepting only Mr. *Parry* and his welch harp; we should have almost as much music

flow? These will in vain be fought for in the antient drama; where the tragedies have scarce any other marks of being such, but a few αἰ αἰ, Φευ Φευ's occasionally dispersed about in them; and the actors in general are merely a sect of unfeeling buskined philosophers; who deliver in a tedious unaffected kind of dialogue their imperfect maxims to be commented upon by the Chorus; † whose

music left, as *Rome* or *Athens* ever knew. I am not ignorant of the surprising stories, which are told concerning the power of antient music. But at the same time I know, that those people are always most apt to be surprised, who are least acquainted with any matter. Nothing is so ready to stare and wonder itself, or endeavours so much to make others stare and wonder, as ignorance. Hence *Græcia mendax* had it's name, as much as for any other reason; and it is probable, that *Egypt* deserved the title still better.

I am aware, that this stricture upon old plays and the manner, in which they were acted, will lay me open to many censures; both for my want of taste, and want of reverence. But,

—— *Clament* (which I would construe, "Let them cry out, as loud, as they please,") *periisse pudorem*
Cuncti pene patres; ea cum reprehendere coner
Quæ gravis Æsopus, quæ doctus Roscius egit!

Since I know the reasons of the outcry would be only,
Vel quia nil rectum, nisi quod placuit sibi, ducunt;
Vel quia turpe putant parere minoribus, et quæ
Imberbi didicere, senes perdenda fateri.

† *Ille regit dictis animos et pectora mulcet.*

business it is to prevent either their being moved themselves, or moving you; for which indeed there generally seems but little occasion for them to exert much care.

The most pity-moving character of any I remember among them, is that of *Electra*; but compare that, as described by either of the * Poets, with the gentle *Elfrida*; and you will soon perceive, how far beyond what the antients ever knew, the moderns have carried all the milder virtues of humanity, that delicacy of sentiment, that tenderness of disposition, and soft complacency, which are the peculiar characteristics of a refinement in manners †.

Hi-

* *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*.

† However trifling or superficial this rule, of forming a judgement of the manners of a people from their entertainments, may seem to some, it is certainly much better, than any, which depends on history: for an historian may be partial, may palliate and excuse; but the poet, who writes for the stage, whose avowed end is to please the people, will undoubtedly in forming his characters, copy, or at least, pay a principal regard to the manners of that people: and if we find him introducing into his scenes a set of actions, which hurt rather than move us, we may be sure, the age he wrote in, was barbarous in some degree, whatever fine names an historian may have honoured it with; just as we certainly know a late age was grossly superstitious, from the number of ghosts and apparitions, introduced into all the plays that were then wrote.

Hitherto I have only mentioned the Tragedians, but the Epic poets also have availed themselves of the same advantage: nor can I in the least doubt, but that a great part of that universal homage, which is paid to *Homer*, *Virgil*, and *Milton*, is owing to the antiquity of their subjects. And if the last of the three has really excelled the other two, I suspect it is in nothing so much, as in having gone beyond them in this article.

If instead of *Man's first disobedience*, &c. *Milton* had sung of *Their first disobedience*, *who*, by a passionate struggle for liberty, had well-nigh brought about the slavery both of themselves and their posterity; (though a subject this of a most interesting nature to us of this kingdom, and one, with which he must have been most thoroughly acquainted,) he would have found it extremely difficult, with all his force of numbers, to have secured himself from being placed upon the same shelf with Prince *Arthur's* poet; and might perhaps have stood there, as little noticed.

Nay, the divine *Homer* himself, were he to come to life again, with the very same powers he had before; and attempt to sing the wars of *Germany* during the three last campaigns;

campaigns, with all the noble exploits of *Frederic* and *Ferdinand* for his materials, would never be able to produce a work of equal estimation with the *Iliad*,

— *Adeo sanctum vetus omne!* —

Though such a paultry business, as the taking of *Troy*, would not have been a work of ten days to one of our modern armies; in which the hero *Achilles* would not, without much instruction, have military skill enough to rank as a subaltern.

But ten long years of siege some thousand years ago, or a * war in heaven, (the very found of which, by the way, almost staggers sober reason, without an absurd enumeration of particulars) sets admiration on the wide gape, and with that on his side, let the poet raise what monsters he will, they all go glibly down,

Scyllamque Antiphatemque, et cum Cyclope Charybdin.—

It

* It would be extremely difficult to determine, whether the Deities of the Heathen poet, or the Angels of the Christian, make the best warriors; though the latter have one manifest advantage over the former; I mean that of gunpowder, and a large train of artillery. —

Surely a Christian Poet could never have fallen into such an absurdity, had it not been through a studious imitation of the Heathen!

It is amazing to think, what outrageous nonsense we are reconciled to, by this single charm of antiquity. All the trumpery of idle fables, and old stories, which nothing, but being old, could secure from being laughed at, is, when dressed in this venerable garb, received with the most profound deference, and sanctimonious regard.*

Next to the poets may be reckoned, as auxiliaries in the same cause, the whole body of declaimers, of what denomination soever; from the public orator down to the private murmurer and complainer about debts and taxes; from him, who pours forth his eloquence in the senate or the pulpit, to him, who, in

* Of this *Virgil* seems to have been well aware, when, intending to describe some religious rites of his countrymen, things of a ticklish nature to meddle with, he thought proper (if we may credit the ingenious interpretation of the sixth book of the *Æneid*, given us by the learned author of *The Divine Legation of Moses*) to mask his intention, not only for greater security, but also for greater dignity, under the hallowed covering of a descent into the regions below.

One trembles to think, how many marks of resemblance, to how many venerable assemblies, an ingenious critic, by the application of this rule, may hereafter discover in *Milton's Pandæmonium*! who can say, that the poet in this, had not an eye to the famous meeting of Divines at *Westminster*?

in an humbler sphere, contents himself with haranguing the political circle of a coffee-house, or a neighbouring club; who have all made it their business to speak as ill as possible of times present; having, perhaps, for their encouragement, found it to be true, that the poignancy of satyr was better suited to the common palates of mankind, than the insipid flatness of panegyric; and that we like, in general, much better to be frightened and abused, than even to be praised and flattered.

As many however of this class betray such an unreasonable malignancy in their censures, one is almost ready to conclude, that they were born with a natural indisposition to be pleased.

Many more of them through prejudice, disappointment, or education, seem to have acquired a certain habit of seeing things in a wrong light, and representing them so to others.

And if to these we add the number of such, as without any kind of conviction, or even examination at all about the matter, fall into trite common-place harangues against the vices of the times; merely because it has been long the practice so to do,
and

and it is become easy therefore to go on in the beaten track; we shall not leave many behind, who deserve our notice.

There is indeed one sort of them, who are of much better quality, than any of the above described; whose account of things, though given with a much better intention, is yet as far from being true, as any of the others. I mean those zealously good men, who purposely describe the wickedness of mankind in as black colors, as they can, to make them start, if possible, at the frightful picture; and who, in order to awaken their hearers to a vigorous prosecution of virtuous measures, endeavor to alarm them thoroughly, with the greatness of their danger in a contrary course: to do which more effectually, they are sometimes tempted to step aside from the exact limits of truth, and borrow a striking feature of vice from the regions of fancy.

Whether, or no, their success has been equal to their honest intention, is no part of our inquiry: but admitting their own account of things to be true, it seems, as if it had not; for they successively go on to describe the times, as growing worse and worse, notwithstanding their most earnest endeavours to the contrary.

I do not mean, that therefore sin should be flattered; or that a wicked age should have nothing, but “smooth things prophesied unto it:” though considering how ill the contrary method has succeeded, it might not perhaps be amiss to try, what giving men a more comfortable prospect would do: we always press forward with greater eagerness; and there is a certain uphill kind of labor in attaining to heights, from whence we are supposed to have fallen, which must needs move slowly on. But there is undoubtedly sufficient reason, for the friends of virtue at all times to aim at inspiring men with a lively sense of their duty, and not to neglect any method, which may answer that good end.

All therefore, which I would be understood to mean by what I have said above, is no more than this, that the character of an age ought not to be taken strictly from such interested accounts, as these; where there is some other end to be answered, besides the mere discovery of truth.

To the causes already assigned, as likely to give rise to the common mistake, (and which are swelled, I am afraid, to a tedious number,) I will add but this one more, *the natural inclination of all mankind, to ascribe*

cribe their unhappiness to any thing whatever, rather than to themselves: if we reflect then, how uneasy they are for ever making themselves in their present circumstances, be they what they will, by their follies and their vices; and yet how willing they are to remove the blame of this from their own doors; we need not be surprised, if we find them all fond of attributing the uneasiness they suffer, more to the natural badness of the times, in which they live, than to reasons, which might throw a reflection on their own conduct.

And from all these considerations, taken together, we may surely discover abundant room, whenever it first happened, for the opinion to obtain, “that present times fell far short of the excellency of former days.” And when once an error has got ground, it not only grows of itself, without either culture or care; but it requires much both of time and pains to root it out.

Having thus traced out the sources, from which men have probably derived their common notion, that the world has been growing worse and worse continually; it may be almost argument enough to shew it's falsehood, just to observe, that had it been
true;

true, there must have been an end of the world, and it's wickedness too, before this time: it is such a downhill road to ruin and perdition, that had men entered upon it; had they begun to decline in virtue and perfection, so early and so fast, as these complaints would make them; they must long e'er this have reached the lowest pitch of degeneracy; and the bands by which society is held together, had been all long ago loosened and destroyed.

C H A P. IV.

Of the evil tendency of this opinion, and the mischief they do, who encourage it.

THIS opinion however is not only false, but like most others, which are so, it is of a most pernicious tendency to civil peace and social happiness: and they, who encourage it, cannot well do a worse office to mankind.

This is no piece of refined modern policy, but was long ago discovered by a great king and moral teacher; who has left us the following maxim; “ Say not thou, what is the cause, that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.” Which words I shall beg leave to consider as a text to preach upon to the end of this chapter.*

The meaning then of this maxim may, first of all, be construed thus, “ Do not set about inquiring into the cause of a thing, which is not in itself true in fact.” This would be to inquire unwisely indeed!

We

* I thought proper to declare this, that those of my readers, whose stomachs are too weak to bear any thing in the sermon way, may pass it over.

We might, notwithstanding, be thought perhaps to extend this meaning to such a length, as however suitable it might be to our purpose, would scarce be agreeable to that wisdom, for which the author of the precept was so highly and so justly celebrated, if we should infer from it, that he intended absolutely to prohibit all inquiry into this subject whatever, which should be on the unfavorable side: — because, if we are really convinced, that our present circumstances fall far short of the excellency of former times; (a case which may happen to a particular place, whilst at the same time the general plan of improvement is still carrying on in the world at large;) we surely not only may, but in prudence should, endeavour to trace out the cause, from whence that former superiority arose; by which means we might perhaps both see, how we had gone off from that good principle; and also be enabled to find out a method of returning into the right way again.

If then it be allowed, that the maxim is not so strictly prohibitory; it might in the next place be made matter of dispute, whether it was meant, as a piece of instruction to those, who should hereafter direct their inquiries

this way, to use the utmost caution and prudence ; or, as a reproof to those, who had already conducted themselves in this business by other principles ; who had shewn an unreasonable dissatisfaction at the present order of things, and from thence had proceeded to hasty and petulant conclusions against it.

And farther, if we even confine the precept to the last mentioned sense ; it may still be doubted, whether it was levelled only at the common discontentedness of mankind in general ; or was pointed more immediately at some particular * person ; who might be famous, in *Solomon's* days, for having instituted a comparison between those and former times, in favor of the latter.

But however doubtful these points may be, it is clear beyond all doubt, that this wise man intended to discourage all such inquiries,

* I would beg leave to observe, that it is no proof of the absurdity of this supposition ; that we, at this distance of time, know nothing more concerning the existence of any such person ; because it is much to be questioned, whether, at the same distance of time from the present, with all the advantages, which modern authors have from the invention of printing, it will not be to the full as uncertain, that ever *we* had such an author amongst us.

quiries, as could answer no other end, but to furnish fresh matter of complaint to peevish and froward minds ; and increase the dissatisfaction, which men are apt enough of themselves to conceive against the conditions, in which they are placed : if he farther designed what he says, as a stricture upon some particular Cenfor of the times, it certainly was, because he knew him to be one of this turn ; one, who *did not inquire wisely concerning this* ; but had taken up his facts, perhaps, on slight evidence, and had been guided, even in his reasoning upon these facts, more by caprice than judgement ;— in short, one, who had shewn his abilities to declame and rail at what every one, as well as himself, could see was amiss, rather than any penetration into the cause, from whence the evil sprung ; or skill in prescribing a remedy, by which it might be cured.

And whenever a person sets about such inquiries as these, merely out of disgust at some present disappointment, or to satisfy a splenetic disposition, which is ever fond of finding fault ; when, in consequence of this, his representations are plainly drawn, more from ill temper, or a desire to lash and expose the age, than a sober inclination to reform it ;
when

when he shews manifest symptoms of virulence, pique, and resentment, things intirely inconsistent with the character of a candid inquirer ; when he betrays either passion or pride, things utterly unbecoming a moral reformer ; — the reproof of *Solomon* is still justly applicable to him, “ Say not *thou*, what is the cause that the former days were better than these ? for *thou* dost not inquire wisely concerning this”. The most favorable construction, that can be put upon such a man’s attempts to depreciate the times, in which he lives, (especially, if he takes the advantage of any disheartening circumstances to spread his poison more successfully;) is, that he is endeavouring to purchase an opinion of his own superior discernment, even at the expence of his honesty ;* is charitably undertaking to undeceive others, who by some mistake are happy ; and is trying, as much as in him lies, to diffuse that chagrin and ill humor, which mark his own gloomy brow, into minds of a better turn, and more cheerful

* For, as the author of the late *Estimate* well expresses it, “ To rail at the times at large, can serve no good purpose ; and generally ariseth from a want of knowledge, or a want of honesty.” *Estimate*, p. 15.

ful disposition ; by which means, if he is of consequence enough to be attended to, (and indeed, what is there, that bodes ill to mankind, but is thought of consequence enough to be attended to? *) he does infinite mischief to the community, of which he is a member ; the stability and happiness of which consist in nothing so much, as in being thought well of by those, who compose it.

* “ Vice impatiently drinks in, and *applauds* his hoarse and boding voice, while like a *Raven*, he sits croaking universal death, *despair*, and annihilation to the human kind.” *Estimate*, p. 169.

CHAP. V.

In which some other opinions are considered.

BESIDES the opinion, already taken notice of, there are some others, which may seem to stand in our way ; and which therefore it may be proper to remove, before we attempt to proceed any farther.

To avoid then, in part, the absurdity of supposing things to have been continually growing worse and worse, some may fancy, that the world, like a day,* as it has had it's morning, must also have it's evening : they may allow, that, for a time, it must have been improving ; that the dawn could not pretend to vie with that blaze and splendor, which should mark the mid-day height ; but, this being once over, things would be upon the decline again ; till they were lost in endless night.

Now, admitting this to be possible, will they say this imaginary *vertex* is already past ? if it be, where must we look to find the æra, when that most singular event happened ?
Was

* The course of human affairs, having begun in the east, and travelled westward, may be thought to give some countenance to this opinion.

Was it at *Babylon*, or *Memphis*; at *Athens*, or at *Rome*, that worldly greatness attained this fancied summit of perfection?—If it be not past already, which the loss men are at to point out clearly the time, when it happened, shews sufficiently it is not; there is every appearance to prove, that the world is not yet near it, though nearer now, than ever it was before; and there is all the reason, which analogy can afford, to assure us, that it will never pass it; but will go on, from one degree of advancement to another, till it has reached the highest point, for which it was designed; when it will yield up it's inhabitants to other worlds, and greater bliss, than it could give them.*

Others,

* It might appear a whimsical conjecture, to suppose, that in our future existence we may possibly pass through all the different planets, both in this and other solar systems: yet, if we are to have bodies hereafter, and a local habitation, this might perhaps be made as plausible an hypothesis, as many others, which have carried their heads full high in the literary world. What our Saviour says, “That in his Father’s house are many mansions”, might with as little force be brought to confirm this, as many other texts of Scripture have been dragged from their original meaning to give evidence for some theological whimsy. And, if we look into the internal constitution of this great globe itself, which we inhabit,

Others, however seem to have thought, there was a certain † equality in human affairs, above or below which they never rose much higher, or sunk much lower; but that all sublunary things, as if under the more immediate influence of that planet, from whence they have their name, were actuated by a kind of tide; which, by turns, would occasion a flow, as it were, in some places, and an ebb

bit, we shall see many appearances, which might lead us to imagine, that it was a place of abode for other animals, before it was fitted up for our reception.

On some such supposition, as the above, the Poet's Hell seems to have been built;

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where, &c.

————— *The dilated Spirit*

To bathe in fiery floods; or to reside

In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice!

† To this opinion may possibly be referred the adage of *Solomon*, “ That there is nothing new under the Sun; But the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be, and that which is done, is that which shall be done, &c”. — And likewise what *Sophocles* says in his *Ajax*;

Ἀπανθ' ὁ μακρὸς κἀναριθμῆται χρόνῳ

Φυεὶ τ' ἀδηλα καὶ φανεῖα κρυπτεῖσθαι. —

There is a passage too in *Tacitus* to the same purpose;

“ Nisi forte rebus cunctis inest quidam velut orbis, ut quemadmodum temporum vices, ita morum vertantur.”

ebb in others; each of which would be followed again by it's respective ebb and flow, in regular succession.

And, in fact, something very like this has happened in the world. States and Empires have had their rise and fall; different places, at different times, have been the envied seats of learning, power, and greatness; and, in their turns again, have become the contemptible residence of ignorance, slavery, and meanness. Temples, Porticos, and Towers, the palaces of Princes, and the schools of Philosophers, have, in this strange revolution, been basely converted into huts for peasants, and stalls for their cattle!

These great and numerous instances of the injurious effects of time, we may, we must lament; the very dread of what may hereafter happen to our own loved country, will enforce a feeling, and compassionate regard for these vast overthrows of former magnificence: and yet perhaps, they were the necessary means of bringing *us* to that towering height of fortune, to which we are now raised. Providence might act in this case, as we see the skilful husbandman do; who, when he has had as many crops from one field, as the soil will yield, which now
by

by frequent tilling is worn out, turns his attention to some other spot; and breaks up fresher ground, in hopes of larger increase, and a more ample return for his labor.

But however this may be, certain it is, that though deluges and earthquakes, the ravages of fire and sword, with other the eventful strokes of time, have delayed the progress of human things toward perfection, they have not intirely prevented it; earthly greatness, like the earth-born Giant, seems to have recovered fresh strength every time it has been thrown to the ground; and even after that long period, in which arts and sciences laid as it were dormant, they have awaked, as if refreshed by this sleep, with new vigor.

Indeed from the most thorough wrecks of time, there has always something escaped; if not as much, as we might wish, at least enough to enable succeeding ages to set out on their inquiries, with greater advantage, than *they* could possibly have, *who* had every thing to invent anew: even a boat, or plank properly shaped, escaping, would easily furnish ideas to future projectors, which probably cost the first inventor many a painful research.

And

And even from this seeming objection, I think, one might draw an almost undeniable argument in favor of modern improvements: since these destructions, which happened to former arts and learning, might be accounted for from natural causes; for, when all the learning of mankind was in one empire, in one country, and perhaps in one city, it might be easy for such an event to happen, as would almost intirely destroy it. But in the diffused state, which learning and arts are in at present, under the care and protection of several different governments, who are all jealous of maintaining their respective share; it must be the hand of God alone, raised to inflict a general punishment for our sins, that could bring about any thing like what happened before on events merely natural.

But if this be the case; if it be really true, that we are now in possession of greater advantages, than God ever gave to men before; what should the consequence be on our part, but greater degrees of virtue to deserve, and of diligence to improve them!

A NEW
ESTIMATE
OF
MANNERS and PRINCIPLES.

PART II.
Of the Knowledge of Mankind.

Alius error est, suspicio quædam et diffidentia, quæ nihil nunc posse inveniri autumat, quo mundus tamdiu carere potuit; ac si illa objectio converiret erga tempus, quâ Lucianus impetit Jovem, cæterosque ethnicorum Deos: "Miratur enim, cur tot olim genuerint liberos, nullos autem suo sæculo? interrogatque jocans, ecquid septuagenarii jam essent, aut lege Pappiâ contra senum nuptias constricti?" sic videntur homines subvereri, ne tempus effectum jam factum sit et ad generationem ineptum. Lord BACON.

But for myself, (says the great Sir WALTER RALEIGH) I shall never be persuaded, that God hath shut up all the light of Learning within the Lanthorn of Aristotle's brains; or, that it was ever said unto him, as unto Esdras, Accendam in corde tuo Lucernam intellectus; That God hath given invention but to the Heathen, and that they only invaded Nature, and found the strength and bottom thereof; the same Nature having consumed all her store, and left nothing of price to after-ages.

W E B DUBOIS

THE PHOENIX

1910-1911

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TO THE
S O C I E T Y

FOR ENCOURAGING

Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce,

This SECOND PART

Treating of ARTS and SCIENCES,

IS

Humbly offered,

As a mark of the Author's great respect.

————— *Nec omnia apud priores meliora,
sed nostra quoque ætas multa Laudis et Artium,
imitanda posteris reliquit. TACIT.*

PART II.

Of the Knowledge of Mankind.

CHAP. I.

*A general view of what is proposed in the
second part.*

HAVING attempted to remove some objections which seemed to stand in my way, and threatened to oppose my conclusion, I shall now undertake a more direct proof of the proposition, which I laid down in the first part; namely, “That all ages and countries taken collectively, the world is, and has been from the earliest notice we have of it, in a state of general improvement”; or, which is nearly the same thing in other words, “That mankind at present is *wiser, happier, and better* than it ever was before.”

This, it must be owned, is a wide and open field, and the paths across it are but faintly marked; the herd has gone another way; people hitherto have paid such a deference to venerable antiquity, as to imagine,

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that the longer ago men lived, they were for that reason, and in that proportion, wiser and better; having seemingly made this mistake amongst others, that by hearing the terms, *ancient* and *old*, applied to former times, they have really been led to suppose the world older, and therefore wiser heretofore, than it is now: whereas in fact, those* early times were the youthful days of the world; which is now, if not in it's old age, at least in a much more advanced stage, than it was then; and consequently has a stronger claim to that wisdom, which greater age gives, than ever it had before.

With this appearance then on my side, especially as knowledge seems to be the grand principle, on which all other improvements depend, I will begin with endeavoring to shew, that men are wiser now, than they formerly were; or, that *science* and the *arts of life* are at present in a state of much higher perfection, than they ever were, at any former period.

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* Sane, ut verum dicamus, *Antiquitas sæculi Juventus mundi*. Nostra profecto sunt antiqua tempora, cum mundus jam senuerit, non ea quæ computantur ordine retrogrado initium sumendo a sæculo nostro. Lord Bacon.

It can hardly be necessary, one should think, to explain, what one means by such common terms, as *science* and the *arts of life*: lest however any mistake should be made; I mean, by *science*, all that knowledge, which mankind are possessed of, by what means soever acquired, or of whatever sort it be; and, by the *arts of life*, I understand the practical production of science into use, comprehending all those various inventions, which contribute, in any degree, to supply men either with necessaries, conveniencies, elegancies, or even amusements.

To be accurate, one should perhaps make these two the subjects of two distinct considerations; it being possible, that the arts of life may flourish in some degree, where science languishes; as luxury, which is evidently a friend to the one, may be thought by some an enemy to the other; so that the same conclusion might not be just, when extended to them both indiscriminately: but they have generally grown up together in such close connexion, that there is little room left for the suspicion of their ever being parted; and therefore it seems needless to consider them asunder: besides, much accuracy is not to be expected in

such a loose way of estimating things, as I am pursuing; in which I aim at nothing more, than just to touch upon the surface of such matters, as lie open to view, and seem to invite the eye; while I leave it to the more discerning and judicious to pry, with more exactness, into less obvious distinctions.

CHAP. II.

A proof, that Arts and Sciences must have been improving, drawn from the nature of the thing.

THAT arts and sciences have been, upon the whole, in an improving state, from the beginning of the world to this time, is, strictly, to be proved only by the authority of history, or matter of fact, as it stands related there. Yet such a degree of probability arises from the very nature of the thing, as may make it seem unnecessary to attempt a direct and formal proof.

For if, as sacred history informs us, mankind derived it's being from two original parents; how necessarily must these two, ignorant and unskilled at first, unless they were to live by mere instinct only, make daily advances in some new discoveries, either of what was needful, or convenient for them! allowing them to have received, from their Maker, some* slight information about

* Some of the learned (as *Heidegger* and *Delany*) have taken a great deal of pains, to shew, that *Adam* had very numerous revelations made to him: I do not mean at all to interfere with their studious labors; but allowing him to have received all the information, they pretend he did, if he was made a rational creature, all, that I can contend for, will be equally true.

bout what was fit for them to eat, what they should do, or what avoid; would their own experience, think ye, make no addition to these first impressions, this so scanty fund of knowledge? would not they find towards the close of life, that they knew much more, than they did at the beginning of it? would they not perceive, that had they known things at first, as well as they did then, they could have got through life more comfortably, than they had done? and would not they treasure up these documents of experience, as useful lessons to their children? These questions are so very clear, that they contain their answers. Their children then, even supposing them not to make all the use of instruction, which they might, would certainly, by this means, set out in the world with much greater advantages, than their parents had done: and in a succession of generations, supposing the natural abilities of mankind to be the same, this must continue for ever to be the case.

I do not mean, by this, to encourage every raw and unfledged upstart, with an overweening opinion of his own towering genius, to think himself wiser than his teachers; or of more understanding than the

aged. It is, no doubt, a mark of duty to believe our parents and instructors wiser, than ourselves; (which, if the principles laid down above be true, they must be;) and it would be well, if we would listen to their wisdom more, than we usually do. But surely to suppose, that, with all our health and strength about us, we can go no farther, than their kindness has conducted us, can be the sign of nothing, but mere sloth or shallow conceit.

Yet this fondness, either for staying where we are, or at least, going on only in the * old way; or the same notion in other words, an over-readiness to fancy it impossible to carry the land-marks of know-

* Certe consilium Prophetæ vera in hac re norma est, “State super *vias antiquas*, et videte quænam sit via recta et bona, & ambulate in eâ.” Antiquitas eam meretur reverentiam, ut homines aliquamdiu gradum sistere, et supra eam stare debeant, atque undequaque circumspicere, quæ sit via optima: quum autem de viâ bene constiterit, tunc demum non restitendum, sed alacriter progrediendum. Lord *Bacon* de Aug. Scient.

But surely, if we can perceive none of the old ways to be right and good, or that are likely to lead us to a conclusion of our present purpose; we are at liberty to choose one of our own; or we can never arrive at any new discovery.

knowledge farther, than where our fathers had fixed them, aided by the absurd ridicule, which is usually thrown upon all new attempts by those self-satisfied men, who are laudably determined to take things, as they find them; has been one grand hinderance, that has occasioned the slow movement of human inventions towards perfection.*

But leaving this reflexion, let us suppose mankind to be now so far increased by degrees, as to have become, at first, too numerous for one family; and afterwards, for one country to contain. Necessity, in this case, would oblige the too populous commonweal to discharge itself of a part of it's cumbrous weight, and to send away some of it's superfluous inhabitants; who must go in search of

* Sapientiam sibi adimunt, qui sine ullo judicio inventa majorum probant, & ab aliis pecudum more ducuntur. *Lact.* de Orig. Erroris. l. 2. c. 8. "By the advantage of which sloth and dulness, (as Sir *Walter Raleigh* quaintly, but strongly, expresses it) ignorance is now become so powerful a tyrant, as it hath set true Philosophy, Physic and Divinity in a pillory; and written over the first, CONTRA NEGANTEM PRINCIPIA; over the second, VIRTUS SPECIFICA; and over the third, ECCLESIA ROMANA."

of new habitations; in places, which before were uninhabited; in climates too, which differed much, from that they left, in soil, fruits, and temperature. These new adventurers then, to make their subsistence easy and comfortable, must, besides the principles they brought from home with them, set themselves with all diligence, to find out and learn many other things, both useful and necessary to be known. And this again would give rise to several new and valuable discoveries. *

If we suppose, lastly, these separate communities to be arrived at the highest degree of perfection, which, independently of each other, they were capable of attaining; how vastly would they all be improved by a mutual intercourse with each other; and that in proportion to the ease, and frequency of this intercourse? what a number of things would be found in use among one people, that had never been thought of by the others; which yet might be introduced into their practice, with the greatest success?

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* According to the old prophecy, "Men shall go to and fro' upon the earth, and knowledge shall be increased."

Whoever considers, how much the art of navigation, the grand means of conveyance from one country to another, has lately been improved by the invention of the compass; and in consequence of this, how much commerce has been extended; (whose interest it is to be acquainted, as much as possible, with the ways and manners of different people, whose business it is to supply the wants of one nation with the superfluities of another, nay, whose study it is even to make superfluities;) will easily see and allow, how much the advantages, which modern times have derived from this intercourse, must exceed any, which could be obtained from it heretofore.

If any one thinks, that sciences have not reaped the same benefit by this means, which arts have; — it must be merely, because he looks upon science to be built on different foundations, from those of nature and experience; for otherwise, the improvements of them both must have been nearly equal.

CHAP. III.

The same proposition proved from a consideration of the places, where Arts have flourished.

THE East, however well suited it was for the first race of mankind to make their appearance in, (as by it's genial warmth there would be a kind of spontaneous production of fruits for their subsistence;) or however well it might be calculated for the speedy dispersion of mankind, (as it consisted chiefly of fruitful vales too narrow for an increasing multitude to dwell in, and disjoined from each other by large; extensive deserts;) it must be, for the same reasons, ill adapted to any considerable improvements. The same heat, which was favorable to the fruits of the earth, would be extremely injurious to the strength of the body, which would become languid and averse to labor, the chief sinew of all art and industry. That large extent of continent too, with such vast deserts in it, would render all trade and commerce extremely hazardous, and inconvenient; by which means, the arts would be deprived of their principal support and encouragement.

Greece.

Greece and *Italy* partook, in some respects, though in a less degree, of the inconveniencies of the East; and therefore, though their advancements in art were carried, considerably beyond the narrow bounds of their eastern predecessors; they must fall far short of what we, their more western, or rather more northern successors, have arrived at. The distinction which * *Tully* makes between the *Ligurians* and those of *Campania*, holds good, in some degree, between the *Italians* in general, and us of this island. They, born under a better sun, had little incitement to improvements, except from luxury or pleasure; which will never furnish such a goading spur to industry, as want can do: we, though we cannot, with reason, complain of nature's sparingness towards us, are placed in such a situation, as makes it necessary to earn her favors

* Speaking of the effect, which places have upon the manners of their inhabitants, he has the following words: "Non ingenerantur hominibus mores tam a stripe generis, ac seminis, quam ex iis rebus, quæ ab ipsâ naturâ loci, et vitæ consuetudine supeditantur &c. *Ligures*, montani, duri atque agrestes. Docuit ager ipse nihil ferendo, nisi multâ culturâ, et magno labore quæsitum. *Campani*, semper superbi bonitate agrorum, et magnitudine fructuum, urbis salubritate, descriptione, pulchritudine. — Ex hac copia — arrogantia et luxuries." *De Leg. Agrar.*

favours, by a studious application of our own endeavors.

And, if there be * any truth in the old proverb, “That necessity is the mother of invention,” the most numerous productions of art, are always to be expected in those places, where the defects of nature are the greatest.† The stroller’s motto, “vivitur ingenio,” can never be so true, as where men must live by their wits, to live at all. In short, what could make a *Dutchman* ingenious but necessity, and what but ingenuity could make such a marsh, as they live in, not only a habitable country; but one, which a few years ago, could

* The number of my brother Authors, the respectable inhabitants of Grub-street, who write plainly from necessity, and yet shew no great marks of invention; may incline some perhaps to think, that the proverb is not true in every instance. And though I profess not to write through necessity, yet it may be well, if I myself escape censure here.

† It will be found too to be in general true, that, where arts are most numerous, (such is the friendly assistance which they mutually lend each other!) there also they will be in the greatest perfection; some few particulars only excepted, which owe the excellence they are brought to, to some extraordinary circumstance, such as embalming amongst the *Egyptians*, shooting with bows and arrows amongst the *Indians*, &c.

could vie with the greatest and proudest state in *Europe*?

However, though necessity be the strongest motive to put men upon the first trials of their skill, yet this end is soon satisfied; and the arts require a better pay-master, and much higher encouragement, than it can give, to shew themselves in any great degree of perfection. It will follow from hence, that of all places arts must flourish most in those, where nature has been rather sparing in her choicest gifts; and yet the genius and riches of the inhabitants incline them much to luxury and pleasure.

If the situation of such a place should, moreover, afford opportunity for an extensive commerce; and the quantity of what are called staple commodities should farther make this commerce an advantageous one; (so that even in acquiring elegancies men acquire fresh opulence, the means of getting more;) here it is, that arts must naturally attain to the highest summit of improvement.

CHAP. IV.

Of the evidence which history gives to the above particulars.

TO the above, which may be called natural arguments in favor of modern excellency, the testimony of all history, if we follow it's guidance through the different places, where the most eminent of mankind have had successively their abode, will perfectly agree.

I am not going to collect materials for a history of arts and sciences; (though it were much to be wished, that such a work was undertaken by an able hand!) but perhaps the following general sketch, in which no more is attempted, than barely to mark a few outlines, may be thought no unfair representation of the antient state of things.

In the East, where the dawn first arose, men lived, as it were, under a sort of twilight; which partook in a great degree of that darkness, which had preceded it. Their knowledge must have been as imperfect, as the accounts we have of it can be supposed to be: according to these, it consisted chiefly of a few moral apologues, where the shadow
was

was much larger, than the substance; a set of loose scattered maxims of life; and some accidental discoveries in the properties of plants and herbs: These, together with a very small number of trifling observations on the heavens, constituting a short rude system of astronomy, or rather astrology, which aided, and in it's turn was aided by, their superstition, seem to make the sum, if such is to be called knowledge, of what the eastern sages knew.

Their religion was such, as their pastoral life might easily be supposed to throw in their way; by their frequent contemplations on the heavens they might be led first to admire and wonder at, and from thence to revere and worship, what they saw most striking there, the sun, the moon, and the stars; which they might also perceive were of much benefit to them, by affording light and heat. And they were probably directed in the choice of what they should offer to these objects of their worship, either to gain their favor, or avert their anger, by reflecting on what would be most agreeable to themselves, in the same circumstances.

Their civil government was plainly suited only to keep in awe beasts of prey; such as
man-

mankind could never have submitted to, but through ignorance, or necessity. Whether parental authority stepped into the seat of empire, and arrogated to itself supreme command; or whether the fears of the herd led them to seek protection under the conduct of some one of greater strength, or cunning than the rest, might perhaps be difficult to determine. But certain it is, the first specimens of human government do little credit to their origin: there was the most abject slavery on the one hand, and the most absolute tyranny on the other, that imagination can well form.

The luxury of the eastern emperors, as they became great, it must be owned, gave considerable encouragement for the arts to shew themselves; but they were hindered from attaining to any great degree of perfection by the narrowness of their commerce; which extending no farther, than to countries of nearly the same produce with their own, and confined to a few articles, such as corn, gems, and spicery, afforded small variety for genius to exercise itself upon.

It must be observed here, that I except out of my account God's peculiar people, the people of *Israel*, together with the religion,
E statutes,

statutes, and ordinances, which he gave them; these being of divine institution, are not subject to those general laws, by which the common course of things is regulated.

Egypt too and it's learning, is a subject, which I would willingly pass over, not as fearing, it will make against me; but, (if it may be consistent with the dignity of an author to own himself ignorant of any thing, that falls in his way,) because I really know very little of the matter. Happy in what they possessed, like the modern *Chinese*, they seem to have been little solicitous about getting any thing, their neighbours had; but extremely so in preventing others from having any intercourse at all with them. Hence the Difficulty of saying, what they knew, or did not know. If any one however has a desire of being better acquainted with them, he need only read the *Divine Legation of Moses*; the author of which incomparable performance is, like the person he treats of, *learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*; to such a degree, that he can tell us exactly the time and occasion, when they first began to write *running hand*!

In the mean time it seems clear to me, that their affectation of so much mystery,

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and secrecy, was but, in general, a cover for their ignorance. True knowledge deals not in mystery, nor does it seek to be hid. Their deifying too the authors of useful discoveries shews sufficiently, that things were near their beginning amongst them. If, besides this, it be true, that *Grecian* learning was built upon their's; we may well conclude, that the foundation was not higher, than the edifice.*

If we pass from hence into *Greece*; we shall find, that they gave a shape and coloring to those outlines of knowledge, which their eastern predecessors had left them: to those rude and uncouth forms of letters, which they received from them, they added substance and sinews, and formed a smooth and most harmonious language; with which they wrought wonders in the provinces of poetry and eloquence, pushed on, as they were,
by

* Primi per figuras animalium *Ægyptii* sensus mentis effingebant; et antiquissima monimenta humanæ memoriæ impressa faxis cernuntur; et literarum semet inventores perhibent. Inde *Phœnicas*, quia mari præpollebant, intulisse *Græciæ*, gloriamque adeptos; tanquam repererint quæ acceperant. Quippe fama est *Cadmum* classe *Phœnicum* vectum, rudibus adhuc *Græcorum* populis artis ejus auctorem fuisse, &c. TACIT. Annal.

by the hopes of living in the memories of mankind after death; the only species of immortality, of which they had any steady apprehension.

The loose and unconnected maxims of former wisdom, they wrought into fine systems of physics, ethics, and politics. They refined their manners and extended their commerce; which however, like their ships, durst not venture, even yet, far from the shores, or launch into the deep.

But though other things, and morality amongst the rest, received considerable improvements here; yet religion still lay in the same imperfect state, it had been in, with only this addition, that the catalogue of deities was enlarged; every virtue and every vice having been taken into the list of gods, and goddesses. Which practice is however not so absurd, as it sounds. Till men could arrive at just notions of the unity, omnipotence, and omnipresence, of the true God; what properer method could be thought of to keep them in awe, than to inspire them with a belief, that there was a particular Deity, who presided over every thing, they had to do with; over every action, thought, and motion of their will;

to

to whom such or such behaviour would either be agreeable, or odious?

But whatever the improvements of *Greece* were, their knowledge was drawn more from the schools, than common life; and consequently was much better fitted for disputes in the one, than for use in the other; was in short much more suited to the concealment of error, than the discovery of truth. The effect, it has had, has been accordingly, just such, as might be expected. Whilst men were content to follow each other in the same narrow path, they neither did, nor could, make any new discoveries: all they could do, was merely to wrangle and dispute, by dint of syllogism, in defence of their common error. And it has cost the world more trouble to get rid of mistakes, thus entailed upon it by authority, than it has met with from all the other stoppages, in the way to true science, whatsoever.

If we look into the writings of their most eminent philosophers, we shall find, that *Aristotle*, instead of following Nature, endeavored, by every stratagem, to catch her in the subtle nets of his logic, and to lead her after him in a string of predicaments: as

well might the spider have attempted to bind the brindled lion in her cobweb.

It may be said, he did not draw his confined notions from the academic school; and that *Plato* had better designs and more enlarged views: but if he had, it was a pity he should go into a wood in search of truth, *inter sylvas quærere verum*; as he seems by that means to have lost both himself, and all who came after him, in endless intricacies. Had he chose the more open country for his prospect, he might perhaps have had a clearer view of those abstract forms and ideas, which in the other situation puzzled him so much: but that vapor and condensed air, which is apt to settle about trees and groves, spoiled all, and rendered every thing confused.

If these two great masters of *Grecian* wisdom excelled in any thing, it was in their rules about government; but even these, (exclusive of the ideal part of them, which was contrived only for *Utopia*,) were calculated, more for *Greece*, than for the world at large. Indeed *Greece* was the world then, and it's separate states the different and respective nations of it. How then shall we compare
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the state of things, which obtained at that time, to the present? when that, which was the whole world *then*, is *now* but one of the meanest and most abject provinces, it contains?

Rome, the next seat of human grandeur, made small advances, beyond what *Greece* had done, except in extent of empire; a nation of warriors and patriots, full of conquest and the honor of arms, were attentive to little else, except what immediately promoted their favorite project, and great ambition of universal empire. And it was not, till they had well nigh effected this grand purpose, that the arts gained any considerable attention among them. Though, when they did bend their thoughts this way, it must be owned, they made a most surprising progress; they even outdid their masters in many instances, and perhaps equalled them in all; particularly in ethics, didactic and satiric poetry, they seem to have gone far beyond the *Greeks*; *Tully's* offices, *Horace's* epistles and satires, with those of *Juvenal* and *Persius*, standing almost without a rival to vie with them. And indeed their knowledge of all kinds appears to have been much more accurate and defined, than that

of the *Greeks*. Their history has less of fable, and more of common life in it; and even their poetry has less of what has been since called romance, and more good sense in it, than that of the others.

But the age of learning was extremely short at *Rome*; no sooner had it attained to any thing like maturity, than it fell, almost at once, into mere dotage; in which sickly state it languished a few years; and then sunk to nothing. It was not long, after arts and sciences began to grow respectable here, that, the constitution being changed, and the seat of empire removed from it's native soil to a country, where it never throve, the vast fabric of *Roman* greatness fell to pieces, even by it's own * weight, as it were; and opened a passage for the inroads of those horrid barbarians, who, being bred in poverty and ignorance, were better suited to mortify, and take a more ample revenge of those haughty lords, who had long affected to be
masters

* *Livy* says of it, before the event happened, “*Ab exiguis profecta initiis, eo creverat, ut jam magnitudine laboret sua.*” And farther adds, that he supposes his readers will hasten on “*ad hæc nova quibus jampridem prævalentis populi vires se ipsæ conficiunt.*”

masters of the whole world; every monument of whose pride now felt their savage hands.

The cloud of darkness, which after this event, so fatal to letters, overspread the face of all human affairs, makes a most dreadful void in the history of science: though it was but the natural consequence of one nation's arrogating to itself supreme dominion; which is no otherwise to be acquired, or maintained by those, who attempt it, than by carefully keeping to themselves all learning, riches, and means of power from the rest of mankind, who are to be their slaves; and consequently they and learning must fall together. This, it is to be hoped, will never again be the case; it cannot, at least, happen by the same means, so long as there are rival nations, jealous of each other's greatness, and whose interest it is, and is known to be, to maintain, what is called, a balance of power.

From this cloud mankind, some years ago, happily emerged; and have recovered enough of antient learning, if not to satisfy their curiosity, at least to inform them of almost every thing material, that was known in the world before. The space included between
this

this æra and the present, is what in general I mean by modern times, when they are mentioned with reference to former ages; but it is equally true, that we have been improving from that time to this.

What comparison then shall we institute between antient knowledge and modern acquisitions, when the whole sum of the former makes but as it were the basis, on which the latter are built? We can easily make all, that men formerly knew, our own; and then, without being tired with any previous search, with all our vigor fresh about us, can from thence set out on new discoveries; which we are still more likely to attain to, because we can calmly look down from our eminence, and see where they, who went before us, were misled and lost their way; can correct their mistakes, avoid their errors, and mark out, and pursue, with less embarrassment, the direct road, which leads to truth.

CHAP. V.

A general comparison between ancient and modern learning.

IT is not to be supposed however, that I mean to assert every thing to have been error and mistake in these our schoolmasters. I would not be suspected of being capable of looking, with indifference, at those stupendous instances of former greatness, *Rome* and *Athens*. It is impossible to survey them without perceiving many circumstances, which strike the mind with awful admiration.

What *superstition to their gods, or adulation to their heroes vanity, led them to excel in, they carried to an amazing height of perfection. It is from hence we see and
own

* Perhaps a similar superstition in modern *Rome*, the adoration paid to the shrines and pictures of saints, &c. may be as strong a reason, as any other, why the *Italians* have continued so long to excel in the arts of sculpture and painting. We know in fact, that amongst ourselves some of the noblest specimens of architecture, we have to boast of, were the works of *Gothic* ignorance, stirred up by zeal and devotion, at a time, when it cannot be said, the arts were in any degree of perfection, equal to the present.

own their superior excellence in architecture, statuary, and their appendant arts. But they seem to have employed their genius and industry, chiefly in some of the inferior parts of science; and appear to have been principally busied; to have spent most of their time and attention, in ornamenting the inlets and gates of knowledge; as if conscious, it was not permitted to their unhallowed feet to enter into her temple. Their goddesses wore a *veil, and they either durst not, or did not, attempt to pull it off. They knew scarce any thing, as we do. They never searched into the hidden sources of science. Their knowledge like the *Nile* was divided into different channels, but they knew nothing of it's head. They wrote laws, but they understood nothing of the *spirit of laws*. They reasoned, but they were intirely unacquainted with *the powers of the mind, or how it acquired it's ideas*. They saw matter, and they saw motion; but they were quite ignorant of the *nature* of the one, and of the *laws*, by which the other was governed. Their knowledge, in short, was drawn rather

* *Velum meum revelavit nemo.*

Part of an old inscription in an *Egyptian* temple of *Minerva*.

ther from their own brain, than from nature. They trusted more to fancy, than to facts : and, like those ingenious architects, who begin their building from the roof, they framed curious hypotheses, which had no foundation to support them. Whereas we, leaving the airy flights of imagination, have taken the surer, though more humble path of sober reason and chastized reflexion ; and ground our deductions on correct experiments, and accurate observation. Their knowledge extended only to a few particulars ; we know somewhat of almost every thing, that can be known, the boundaries of learning having been as much enlarged by late discoveries, as those of the habitable globe have been by the addition of a new world. The powers of mechanisim, and other parts of useful science have been carried to such perfection, as former times could never have conceived possible ; to such indeed, as the present may hardly esteem credible. To enumerate particulars is impossible ; the very catalogue and mere index of our improvements would fill as many volumes, as heretofore contained all the knowledge, which mankind were possessed of.

C H A P. VI.

Some particulars, which are likely to be disputed.

NOtwithstanding the above general comparison turns out so favorable to present times ; there are some, to whose narrow minds one particular art or science seems to include all excellence ; and who, on that account, will still give the preference to former days.

It is for this reason the man of classic learning, who fancies, that all knowledge, of any worth, is confined to *grammar, rhetoric, and poetry*, will sigh, that his lot of life was not cast in the *Augustan* age. The *man of war* will wish, he had seen the dispositions of *Cæsar*, or of *Hannibal* ! the devout and serious *Christian*, with a better heart, though not much better reason, will carry back his desire of having lived nearer to that memorable æra, when the Son of God, by coming into the world, enlightened and improved mankind.

Look into these respective ages, and you will find men wishing, in the same manner, to have lived farther back still ; which shews of itself the wish to be absurd.

But

But let us examine, in their order, a little more narrowly into these several particulars, and bring their merits to a nearer view.*

* It may perhaps be said, that I might have carried this chapter to a much greater length, by inserting many other particulars, which are as likely to be disputed with me, as the above. — Indeed I believe, I might have made the chapter endless by that means; so many, and such strenuous advocates have the ancients to defend their cause in every instance! a principal reason of which may possibly be this; boys are early flogged into a high opinion of their worth and excellence; and they cannot easily bring themselves to think afterwards, that all the harsh treatment, which they suffered, on this account, from the *plagosus Orbilius*, who had the ordering of their youth, was for any thing less, than matters of the highest importance: on the contrary, having at length, by labour and application, acquired a competent skill in Greek and Latin, they are apt to imagine, they have attained the very summit of human learning; and look down from thence on the other parts of it, as low and groveling. To this pride of theirs, we may add a love of ease, which renders them unwilling to enter upon any new branch of knowledge, where all the drudgery of first principles must again be undertaken; especially, as they find their vanity sufficiently flattered already, by being looked upon in the eye of the world, as *polite scholars*. If some of our best English authors had the sanction given them of being taught at school; this attachment to antiquity, merely as such, would gradually wear off; boys would learn sense as well as sound; and our language, in time, receive the improvements, of which it is capable.

C H A P. VII.

Of language, and those parts of science, which depend more immediately upon it, such as rhetoric, poetry, &c.

PLEASED with having learned to talk, the ancients took vast pains to shew the acquisition, they had made; hence the many bawbles of grammar, rhetoric, and poetry, to be found amongst them. But what are these more, than mere toys and rattles, well enough suited indeed to the infancy of the world, but which it's manly and more philosophic age must needs hold in low estimation?

All pretensions then to superior excellence, in these instances, might be given up on the side of the moderns, without interfering at all with the plan, which I have hitherto been advancing: since, though science in general be like a river, and increases the farther it is removed from the small springs, which gave rise to it; yet some parts of it resemble rather lakes or standing ponds, formed occasionally perhaps from the overflowings of the other, but which in return contribute nothing to it's enlargement;

ment ; so far from that, being incapable of increase themselves, beyond a certain pitch, they may accidentally be dried up, without affecting in the least degree the course of the other, which still runs on as before,

— “ *Viresque acquirit eundo.*”

In fact, whatever depends upon experiment and observation, (which all the nobler and more useful parts of knowledge do) is capable of continual improvement. But eloquence and poetry, as soon as the language of a people is at all formed, may be as complete in a single age, as the experience of a thousand could make them. Nay, early times have some manifest advantages in this respect : their language must necessarily abound most in metaphors and allusions, which are the great ornaments of eloquence and poetry : the simplicity too of men’s manners, at such times gives a boldness and freedom to their sentiments, which will hereafter be expressed with more caution and diffidence. Even their knowing no better raises a * confidence,

* We have an instance of this kind of assurance given us by *Suetonius*. “ Germanorum legatis in orchestra sedere permisit (*Claudius*) simplicitate eorum & fiduciâ motus, quod in popularia deducti, quum animadvertissent Parthos & Armenios sedentes in senatu ad eadem loca sponte transferunt.”

fidence, and an honest assurance in them; which add a wonderful force and energy to what they say. And it is highly probable, that the *Indian* chiefs, who now figure it so much in oratory before the assemblies of our colonies, will grow less eloquent, though not less learned, as they become more civilized, and leave off throwing down their belts of wampum, at the close of their periods.

A particular reason too might be assigned, why the *Greeks* and *Romans*, when their manners became more refined, should excel us in these instances. They had * error to deck out; we, truth: the former of which is a much finer subject for fiction and flowing language, than the latter. The tinsel and paint, which add charms to the harlot, would

And perhaps the speech given to our countryman *Caraciacus* by *Tacitus*, which seems drawn on purpose to suit a simplicity of manners, is the finest piece of oratory, that ever was included in so small a quantity of words.

* So much advantage has error in this respect, that let two persons with equal powers of oratory set out; the one, to teach our holy religion in all its purity; the other, to propagate some wild enthusiastic notions about it; the number of converts, I would venture to say, made by the former, would bear no proportion to those of the latter.

would suit but ill with the grace and dignity of the matron. It is for this reason, that all our poets apostatize from their religion, and turn worshippers of *Apollo* and the *Muses* ; and, when they want any strong coloring, are obliged to have recourse to *Pagan* rites and ceremonies : so that, if by any means the *Pantheon* should be lost, one half of them would not be intelligible to the *English* reader. Even the great *Milton* himself, is but 'a kind of heathen-christian, having plainly shaped his angels after the pattern of *Homer's* deities. How much it is for the honor of our holy religion, to have it's sacred mysteries dressed in the garb of heathen mythology, shall be left to others to determine.

These things being considered, whether we may pretend to rival the ancients in point of eloquence, I know not. Having had little access to the houses of parliament (the only places, I suspect, where any thing like true oratory is practised among us) I have never heard our English *Demosthenes* ; from some * speeches however, occasionally pub-

* It would certainly do our country no small credit, if a collection of some of the best speeches in parliament was separately published, *Debates, Journals, &c.* being too voluminous to find them in.

published, one would be inclined to think, if we fall short of the antient orators in any thing,

The Clergy must excuse me for not mentioning the Pulpit on this occasion ; as I am satisfied, there is not much eloquence shewn there ; though more now, than formerly has been.

Indeed it is not easy to determine, how much it ought to be practised there. From the specimens of what one sees *Whitfield*, and his crew, able to do with mankind, by a very coarse application of this talent, one might conclude, it would not be much for the quiet of the community, to have the passions much stirred by religious eloquence. And this is the misfortune of all eloquence, that it's greatest influence is over the weakest understandings, where it is just as likely to do harm, as good. All therefore, which probably ought to be attempted from the pulpit in this way, is manly sense and sober reason, with a very moderate proportion of ornament, and a serious, earnest, emphatic elocution. But this is humbly submitted to the judgement of the great *National Preacher*, who knows so much better, what his in-brethren ought to do.

As for the Bar, the practice and method of pleading there, affords the modern advocate little opportunity of displaying any thing like eloquence. Our laws are so numerous, and adjudged cases so common, that the pleader has little else to do but to explain their intent and meaning, on the one side ; and on the other, to puzzle and perplex it : as for any address to the passions of the judge or jury, cases of doing that, with any propriety, seldom happen, except in the occasional trials of state criminals ; in which instances our lawyers have always done justice to their character, and their clients.

thing, it can only be in action; (which however, it must be owned, was adjudged to be almost the whole of the matter by one of it's greatest masters, though his opinion does not give one the highest idea of it's worth) as for sense and language, these specimens are clearly equal, if not superior, to any productions of antiquity.

But let not the choir of *Parnassus* be alarmed: notwithstanding the uncertainty, which I have expressed about eloquence; I do not mean so tamely to give up the bays. On the contrary, could my vote determine it; I would give it in favor of the moderns, without hesitation.

With regard to language, after all the pains, which the *Greeks* and *Romans* have taken with their's; they are both as far from being philosophic languages, as our's, or the *French*; and contain almost as many anomalies in them: in point of perspicuity, the advantage, by means of particles and auxiliaries, seems clearly on our side: and for numbers, all antiquity cannot produce such an instance of their power and harmony, as *Dryden's Ode on Saint Cecilia's Day*.

But the cause of the Muses is of too much consequence to be rested on one single in-

stance, however striking it may appear. And yet to enumerate in a particular comparison all the Odes, Elegies, Epics, &c. which ancient and modern wit has produced, would be an endless business, in all senses. Perhaps we may shorten the inquiry, by dividing poetry into three distinct sorts, as it is more immediately directed either to the head, the heart, or the imagination. The first kind is that which has been called the *didactic*; the second will include the *elegiac* and *dramatic*; and under the * third, may be ranked the loftier

* I have reckoned that sort last, which, I know, is, by those of high taste esteemed the first; but when the poet neither instructs me, nor raises in my breast any tender emotions, he sinks, in my estimation, into a character, very little superior to that of a wire-dancer. I may say with *Horace*,

*Ille per extensum funem mihi posse videtur
Ire poeta.*

But then all he does, is merely to surprise me with instances of art and agility. He may indeed sometimes, by the pictures which he draws, or the harmony of his numbers, rise to the praise of a good painter, or a skillful musician. But at best, I should as soon compare *Giardini's* tricks upon the fiddle to sound music; as the sublime *Epic*, or star-striking *Pindaric*, to the more chastised kinds of poetry; where the muse condescends to be the handmaid of philosophy; and endeavors to give her mistress fresh charms, whilst she is employed in delivering the great precepts of truth; in tracing out the spring of human

loftier fort of *Odes*, together with the descriptive, that is, far the greatest part of the *Epic*.

Every

human actions; in laying open the sources of our passions; and teaching us, how to moderate them. The great Thunderer's nod, in *Homer*, has no charms for me; indeed the only line almost, which I ever read in him with sincere pleasure, is that, in which the pensive, unhappy father is described, after his suit had been rejected;

“ Βῆ δ' ἀκρων παρὰ Δίνα πολυφλοισβοῖο θαλάσσης.”

Though perhaps there may be some reason to suspect, that the pathos even of this line is more accidental, than designed. The circumstances, which give the heightening to it seem to be principally the place, where the old man takes his walk; (the sea-side being peculiarly adapted to melancholy contemplation;) and the contrast between his grief-bred silence, and the noise of the beating surge, strongly conveyed to the mind by the epithet, πολυφλοισβοῖο. But as for his walking by the sea-side, there was probably nothing more intended by it, than merely to signify his going out of the camp, which was situated just by. To shew, that the poet did not choose this piece of scenery, as peculiarly suited to his purpose on this occasion, we may observe, that he makes the *Greeks* do almost every thing there — παρὰ Δίνα, or ἐπὶ ρημῶν θαλάσσης, they eat, fight, and play. And as for any peculiar beauty in the epithet, πολυφλοισβοῖο, his using it always indiscriminately, whenever the metre requires such a word, inclines one to think, that it owes the propriety, which it has in this place, more to our ideas, than to his; who seems to have meant nothing more by it, than he does by his ἐπεὰ πτεροῦντα; νηα μελαίνην; or indeed almost any other of his epithets; which appear, in general,

Every other species, of whatever denomination, is but a different mixture of the above.

To

to be chose more on account of their being dactyles or spondees, than for any other assignable reason whatever. Why else do we hear of ποδας ωκυσ Αχιλλεύς, or κορυθαιολῶς Ἐκτωρ, when the business is only to make a speech? where ὑποδρα ἰδων, or χωομεν κηρ might have a propriety, but the others none. Thus we have πολυμήις Οδυσσεύς, when his honorable employment is no more, than what the greatest idiot might have performed, as well as himself; only to take those by the heel, whom *Diomedes* had knocked down, and drag them out of his way,

————— Αταρ ΠΟΛΥΜΗΤΙΣ Οδυσσεύς,

Ὅντινα Τυδείδης αορι πλῆξειε παραστας,

Του δ' Οδυσσεύς μέλοπιθε λαβων ποδος ἐξερυσασκε. Il. X.

He might have found a much better opportunity, for using this epithet a little below (had not he been guided in his choice by the reason above mentioned) where *Ulysses*, by a most surprising stretch of thought, discovers that his bow will supply the place of a whip; but here he uses a very different one,

Τοφρα δ' αἶρ' ὁ ΤΛΗΜΩΝ Οδυσσεύς λυε μωνυχας ἱπῶας,

Συν δ' ηριεν ἱμασι, καὶ ἐξηλαυνεν ὀμιλιν

ΤΟΞΩΙ ΕΠΙΠΛΗΣΣΩΝ, ὥπει καὶ μακρὰ φαινην

Ποικιλιν ἐκ διφοροιο νοησάτο χερσιν ἐλεσθαι.

Ροιζήσεν δ' ἀρα · &c. ——— ΚΟΠΤΕ δ' Οδυσσεύς

ΤΟΞΩΙ · τοι δ' ἐπιούλο, &c. Il. X. γ. 498.

What is here said of *Homer*, and elsewhere of other ancients, is not meant, so much, to point out any defect in them; (whose merit, all things considered, must be acknowledged to be very great) as to shew the want of candor in critics, who weigh their merit, and that of the moderns, in very different scales; and will not throw in the same grains of allowance in the one case, as in the other.

To give an instance of comparison then in each of the three sorts, can it be at all doubted, but that *Pope's* Ethic Epistles far excel every thing of the kind in ancient poetry? Will not *Milton* be allowed to stand at least, upon the same level with *Homer* and *Virgil*? And may not some Odes, lately published from *Strawberry Hill*, justly claim the precedence of any in *Pindar*? The second sort then is the only one left, in which the excellence can be disputed with us. And even in this, with regard to the *elegiac*, one need not be afraid of meeting with much contradiction, if one should say, that no age or country ever produced an elegy, comparable to that in a *Country Church Yard*.

But in point of dramatic perfection, it seems on all hands agreed, that the moderns must give way to the ancients. If we ask, why? it will be answered, Because we have no chorus in our plays; which however, it must be owned, got it's place in those of the ancients more through necessity, than choice. It had the right of prior possession, which could not easily be set aside. Plays at first, were nothing but little interludes, made to diversify certain choral songs, in honor of *Bacchus*, the first species of the drama, that ap-

appeared. When these were improved into more regular and perfect pieces, the chorus still maintained it's place by virtue of it's age, and the deference, which was paid to it on that account.

That it adds a dignity to the drama, must perhaps be allowed; and to those, who are fond of shows and processions, it would no doubt greatly enhance the merit of a play. That it is the guardian, or rather parent of the unities, is another point, which cannot well be disputed: for as it consists of a number of persons, got together in a great measure by accident, it cannot well be supposed, that these can be kept together long; or be easily removed from place to place. But then how confined, in respect to variety, must this needs render the drama? for how few actions, or plots are there of any importance, which will admit the supposition of being compleated in two, or even in twelve hours, or in one and the same place? and if you once begin the magic of scene-shifting, it may as well be extended from the palace to the forum, as from one room in the palace to another.

They too, who judge from nature, and not from rules laid down by *Aristotle*, and

a set of critics, whose aim it has been to follow him, rather than nature, will not perhaps be inclined to think, that probability is much consulted by the introduction of a chorus. An *acting audience*, which seems to be the true character of the chorus, may, in itself, be no very improbable thing: but an *acting audience*, which at the same time supposes another; *hearing*, audience present, whose judgement it is to inform and regulate, is an utter outrage against all probability. Besides this acting audience, which is to direct the other's judgement, (of the propriety and good tendency of which, to the manners of the common people, a great deal has been said) is generally so mysterious in delivering it's own, that it is usually the most difficult part of the play to be understood: the songs of the Sybils themselves could scarcely be more obscure, than some of the *Greek* choruses must needs have been to common understandings.*

It is still more absurd to suppose, that a set of persons fitted for the purpose, should
all

* What *Horace* says,

Sortilegis non discrepuit sententia Delphis,
is true of the chorus in more senses, than one.

all be got together, without any apparent or previous reason for it, prepared with the finest flights of poetry; such, as do not seem to spring from any sentiments of the heart, excited by the turns and incidents of what is transacting, but are merely the visionary work of imagination, carried into too long a train of distant ideas to arise from any present, momentary impulse: and these, to take the business still farther out of nature's path, are to be accompanied by the highest strains of harmony, and all the pomp of music.

That they too, who constitute the chorus, should either follow the principal character into his private apartment, where he might properly deliberate; or that he should deliberate aloud in an open court-yard, before fifty different persons; who are all to be made acquainted with the inmost * secrets of his heart; and yet are to interfere no otherwise, than by advice; when perhaps the very worst of actions and designs are carrying on; are all of them matters, which accord but ill with the common notions of what constitutes the probable.

Lastly,

* *Ille tegat commissa*, — and that of all the characters indiscriminately.

Lastly, that a set of inferior characters, (such as the chorus in most cases must consist of, that the upper parts may be filled with proper dignity) should have influence to controul; authority to dictate; or understanding to advise, and to deliver the great precepts of truth; is such a stretch to all seeming, as nothing, but the poet's licence, *quidlibet audendi*, can possibly give a sanction to.*

Many

* For an instance of the impropriety, intended to be marked here, let any one read the TPAXINIAI of *Sophocles*; in which the chorus, who ought to read lectures to *Hercules* "de dolore tolerando," consists of nothing better, than merely a set of gossips: call them priestesses, or what you will, an old woman can be nothing, but an old woman: and a young one cannot well be supposed to have much influence, in matters of morality.

Accordingly, after *Hercules* appears upon the stage, this respectable chorus, of young or old ladies, whichever they be, does nothing like what *Horace* determines to be it's duty —

(*Ut regat iratos, et amet pacare tumentes*)

offers not a word, either to comfort *Hercules*, or vindicate *Deianira*; but immediately, as if conscious of it's own insignificance, seems to shrink away to one side of the stage, and stands almost mute for the remainder of the play; only the leading lady just informs us, that "Her hair stood on end at hearing
" of her master's misfortunes:" that "It must be a
" sad thing for *Greece* to be deprived of such a
" man:" and that "She was determined to stay to the
" end

Many other particulars might however have been taken notice of; such as, one person's expressing the sentiments of twelve, or any number of others, without any mutual consultation; which is the case of the *acting* part of the chorus; or, a number of persons delivering the same sentiments in precisely the same words, which is the case in the *singing* part. The circumstance of an

OMNES,

“end of these dismal doings, (perhaps, to see the “funeral) though to be sure, nothing of this sort “could happen, without *Jupiter's* having a hand in “it.” These are the only observations, she has to make upon the occasion, which, as *Shakespeare* expresses it, seems to be “The true butter-woman's rate to “market.” Though it must be owned, the monster-killer lets himself down as much, as he well can, to their level, by the most feminine complaints, that ever an opera-hero uttered: for a specimen, hear him,

ΑΙ ΑΙ Ω ΤΑΛΑΣ, Ε΄, Ε΄.

This makes a whole line in a long speech of his, consisting of 130; that is, if the common division be right, within five lines as long, as the whole Third Act; very natural, no doubt, for one in his circumstances, dying, as he describes himself to be, with excruciating pains! — Where too could an *English* translator find whimpering interjections, enough to render this puny lamentation by, unless he went to miss in the nursery, just as little master had bit her finger, or scratched her doll's cap off?

I shall say nothing of the little attention, which seems to be paid to the article of time in this play, not-with-

OMNES, in one of our plays, agreeing in the same form of expression, has frequently afforded matter of just ridicule to the critics; how much more justly might this same circumstance have provoked their censure in the chorus, where it is carried to a much greater height of absurdity? Such a parcel of lifeless mutes too upon the stage, (which could be but ill avoided by making a first and second chorus) must hang like so many

withstanding it is wrote in *Greek*, and has a chorus; though to preserve any thing like a unity in this respect, *Hercules*, *Hyllus*, and *Lychas*, must all be supposed to have travelled in *seven-league boots*. Neither shall I take notice of many other strange particulars, such as *Hercules's* desiring his son to marry his whore, who had been the cause of his mother's death; &c. because they are not much to the present purpose.

It might however be difficult for any one to assign a good reason, why *Hercules* is brought upon the stage at all, unless it were merely to shew, how loud he could roar; as he never makes his appearance, till the fifth act; till the principal character is dead, and the chorus has sung her last song; that is in short, till the play, or at least all the distress of it, is over. But perhaps the poet knew he could not raise in his audience an idea, of distress enough, on *Deianira's* account, nor even on *Hercules's*, unless he exhibited him ALIVE, and made him bellow a little: as if the *Athenian* theatre had cried out, with the humorous Old Knight, "Prick me BULL-CALF till he roar:" but, could this be contrived for an audience of taste?

many dead weights upon every movement; especially in the *Greek* theatre, where, by being masked, they could not even shew the concern they had, in what was going on, by their looks and features.

Perhaps, if we must have a chorus, the only way of remedying all these inconveniencies, would be to form it of certain *Genii*, *Sylphs*, or *Gnomes*, — who might easily be supposed to be perfectly acquainted with all human transactions, without having any right to interfere in them; and yet might take a pleasure in hymning their sentiments about them. The songs of these imaginary beings, might give as many breathing times to the poet and his audience, as he thought proper; (for it is not easy to see the necessity of their being precisely five, though both *Greek* and *Latin* authority has determined it so) And being intirely under his management, he might take care to let them sing only just so much, as would be to his purpose,

— *Quod proposito conducat, & hæreat aptè.*

These songs would undoubtedly fill up the space, between the Acts, with much greater dignity, and propriety, than the poor shifts of a ballad, or a dance, which at present we have recourse to. Here too would
be

be room for all the powers of music to shew themselves. And here the poet might be properly delivered of all the towering flights of imagination, which could not be so fitly introduced into the more sober drama. Into these characters, besides, he might throw as much oracular wisdom, and moral instruction, as he pleased: whilst, in the mean time, the acting part of the chorus, in the body of the play, might be much more naturally supplied, as it is amongst the moderns, by a friend, or a confident.

It may be objected to this, that it would be likely to encourage superstition among the vulgar; but what is there so perfect, as that no objections can be made to it?

In short, as the great business of the stage is, to please us into instruction and improvement; to humanize the heart, either by deceiving it into temporary pleasure, or by affecting it with imaginary ills, and fancied scenes of distress; the poet, who has the greatest power over the imagination; who can, for a certain time, carry us with him, in his fancy's chariot, wherever he listeth; provided he does not hurt or shock * us
by

* By *us* I mean those who are guided by their natural feelings, not those, who are governed by a
G capri-

by the violence of his motions, seems to pursue the best and most probable path for obtaining his end. In this light all the sons of *Apollo*, ancient and modern, do not equal the single worth of *Shakespear*; *Shakespear*, “ whose eye (to use his own best words)

——— “ *In a fine fancy rolling,*

Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; &c.

And who (as he elsewhere expresses himself) “ Holds as it were the mirrour up to
“ nature; shews virtue her own feature;
“ scorn her own image; and the very age and
“ body of the time, his form and pressure.”

However, if the old method must needs be thought the best; there is an instance ready at hand to shew, that the moderns can excel the ancients, even in their own way. It will easily be guessed, I mean *Caractacus*; which, for the august and solemn scenery; the majesty of the characters, the dignity, propriety, and poetry of the chorus, exceeds the most perfect model, which the ancients have left us.

I

capricious and whimsical taste of their own acquiring; whose greatest *pleasure* consists in being as much *displeased*, as possible; and who therefore seek for as many opportunities of being shocked, as they can find.

I have been carried so far in the road of criticism, that I am led to say somewhat of the thing itself.

How much beyond former clumsiness then, are the modern refinements of this art? how elegant, delicate, and correct, are the Notes and Comments, lately published on Two Epistles of *Horace*? and what a mere *Florilegium* does even *Longinus* appear to be, when compared with the philology, contained in the *Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*? In short to such a pitch of improvement has this art been brought; that one may venture to affirm, there is more good sense and rational criticism, to be met with in one of our common * *Monthly Reviews*, than in all the old *scholia* put together.

But to say the truth, Critics and Commentators usually infest only the lighter, and more trifling parts of science; such as poetry, philology, &c. just as wasps and hornets settle about hollow trees, and unsound earth:

* Perhaps this will be looked upon, as a *sop for Cerberus*: I cannot say, that was my original intention in making the comparison; but if it answers that good end, and carries me safely past that frightful monster, I shall have the highest opinion of my own good management.

earth: and there is, for that reason, this plain sign of superior strength and soundness in modern learning, that this sort of insects dare scarce attempt to fasten upon it. There will never be the same number of critics and commentators, upon *Locke* and *Montesquieu*, that there has been upon *Plato* and *Aristotle*. And why? because the opinions of the latter are so vague and undetermined, that they afford ample room for conjectures and explanations; whereas the former are so accurate and precise, any attempt to explain them would but render them confused. It is from hence possibly the complaint has arisen, which one has sometimes heard made by those, who have had the education of youth committed to them, that they found it extremely difficult to read lectures, at least to their own satisfaction, upon *Locke*. The case really is, he has left extremely little for any one to add to what he himself has said.

CHAP. VIII.

Some general observations on ancient and modern learning.

TO close this long disquisition about antient and modern learning, the different lights, in which they may fairly be considered, seem to be as follows.

The view of antient learning, where every now and then a striking sentiment appears, is not unlike that of a wide extensive country, uncultivated for the most part; but in which, here and there, you will discover a pile of magnificence; which, from the situation it is in, receives an additional grandeur. Whereas the modern state of science resembles more some favorite spot of ground; on which every thing, that either labor or art could contribute, has been freely bestowed; where the whole is in a manner finished and complete; but, for want of contrast, no particular part is so likely to catch the attention.

It is from hence, that the ancients are thought to abound more in the sublime, than the moderns. Barren countries always afford the most striking prospects: the ΔΕΙ-
NON and the ΦΟΒΕΡΟΝ are most remarkable there.

It is for the same reason some have imagined, they excel us also in *Genius*. Having had the first freer range into nature, they seized to themselves, what they esteemed most worthy of their regard; just as the first travellers in an unknown country mark down the most remarkable mountains, lakes and rivers, which they meet with there. But then they, who come after them, and take a more accurate survey, cannot justly be said to have less genius, than the others, or to be only their imitators; though perhaps they give us the same rivers, lakes, and mountains, which the others had done before.

The moderns too, by their practice of quotation, have greatly contributed to lessen their own character in this respect, and to raise that of the antients. At the revival of learning, all the knowledge in the world was necessarily drawn from the old fountains, which were now again laid open; and men were scholars in proportion, as they were more or less acquainted with these. Afterwards, when they began to think a little for themselves; as if they had been afraid to go alone, or trust themselves out of leading-strings, they were glad to seek for supports, to what they advanced, in the opinions of the
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the antients; which by this means were raised to such a degree of authority and importance, that what was matter of choice in a great measure at first, became in time almost necessary; scarce any thing being thought right, which was not confirmed by some instance of former wisdom to the same purpose. Men, for this reason, were put upon straining the sentiments of the ancients to meanings, which they never dreamt of: and from hence, in many cases, the moderns have been suspected of borrowing from them, what in fact they first gave them, by their own forced interpretations.

It is no concern of mine however, to decide the controversy of merit between the two. All I am inquiring about is, only, to find out, who know the most; not what merit each might have in acquiring the knowledge, they are masters of. *Columbus* might have more merit, as the Discoverer of *America*, than *Hernan Cortez* had; — but, notwithstanding his pretensions, it is certain, the other penetrated farther into it; and may, without any injury done to the former's reputation, be styled, and have the praise of being, it's Conqueror.

CHAP. IX.

Of the art of War.

THE art of war is so totally changed, that it is hardly possible to compare, what it is with what it was.*

However, if it is become rather a more civilized business; if the work of bloodshed be sooner over; if the fate of a pitched battle be sooner decided; if the carnage, which ensues, be less dreadful; and the conquered, especially that unfortunate part of them, who are made prisoners, be treated with greater humanity; we may well say, it is improved. We might also appeal to living instances of Heroes, greater than any, which *Rome* or *Greece* ever saw; whose fame was chiefly owing to their having to deal only with barbarous and

* “If in any thing we deviate from the practice of the antients, it is in our military discipline, in which we are so absolutely new, that there is scarce any thing used, that was preferred by our ancestors.” *Machiavel*.

† The subscription now going forward in favor of the *French* prisoners, wretches left to starve by their own king and country; will be a lasting honor to this nation in point of humanity! but this consideration properly belongs to another place.

and unpolished nations ; whom it was scarce any merit to conquer, their own unskilfulness had so great a share in the victor's success.

But, however true it may be, that the world is improved in this, as well as in other instances ; how much more desirable a truth would it be, to say, that our other improvements had rendered all attention to this less necessary !

And did not the matter of fact, of almost all *Europe's* being engaged in war at present, stand in our way ; it might perhaps be no difficult undertaking to make this appear a probable hypothesis. One may see, how, by the first institution of government, private quarrels were, in a great measure, superseded ; the feuds and animosities of particulars being made subject to the decision of common laws. The imperfect state indeed of these governments at first left room, too frequently, for particulars to dispute the public authority : and hence arose the calamity of civil war. But now, by the improvements made in most of the governments in *Europe*, we have ceased in a great measure to hear that worst of sounds, the din of civil discord. May there not then be some room to hope,

hope, from these two gradual advances towards perfection; that, if *Germany* and some of the other less perfect states here, with the whole unsettled Western world, (which have of late afforded the chief materials for public broils) were to receive the same improvements, which other states have; there would almost an end be put to all occasion for public, as well as civil wars? when we should see the law of nations have as full effect, as the law of particular kingdoms: when that most desirable of all prophecies, yet unfulfilled, might receive it's full completion; when, "Nation should no more lift
" up sword against nation; neither should
" they learn war any more."

If there be not room to hope for this, there is at least sufficient reason to wish for it; since what deforms the fair and regular appearance of things so much, as the horrid outrages of war; even when it is conducted by the best rules, which civilized nations have imposed upon it, to tame it's fiercer spirit?

However, till this most happy event can take place, we may well add the following wish to the former; — that so long, as war is to be the resource of empires, quarrelling with
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each other, *Britain* may never want such
* gallant hearts and able heads, to defend
her interests, as have lately raised her glory,
and their own honor to such an amazing
height !

* As the Soldier's character, so long as it is necessary, must ever be one of the most respectable in all states ; and may well claim every instance of praise from us sons of peace, who enjoy the ease, which they, at the hazard of their lives, purchase for us ; so should nothing prevent me from offering the poor tribute of my praise, on this occasion to all those, who have, during the course of this war, done so much honor to themselves and their country ; but that their number renders a particular mention of their names almost impossible : since if I once began to quote the particular persons, who deserved to be distinguished, I should almost write a complete list of his Majesty's forces, both by sea and land, from the Admiral and General, down to the common seaman and soldier ; and so should make it no distinction at all : indeed there can not well be any made, but between those, who have been in service, and those, who have not ; which last, if they had had the same opportunity, would, I am persuaded, have discharged their duty as faithfully, as the others.

C H A P. X.

Of Religion, considered as a Science.

AS to Religion, men seem to have followed their senses first, in the choice of objects to worship ; their passions, next ; and last of all, their reason.

Even the Deity, in the different revelations of himself to mankind, seems to have acted in a manner, somewhat analogous to this.

To our first father and early patriarchs he appeared in bodily shape, like a man ; the highest degree of excellence, to which their ideas probably then reached. He afterwards cloathed himself in more majesty and splendor ; and was not visible to the *Jews*, but in clouds, or in fire : still however did he talk even to them of the strength of his arm, and the furiousness of his wrath ; and endeavoured to influence them to a discharge of their duty, by setting before them temporal rewards and punishments ; the weakness of their understanding, even yet, not suffering them to look at any higher things. But at last, when the fullness of time was come, he “ brought life and immortality to light ;” and
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has represented himself, as far as it was possible, to our narrow comprehensions, as he is ; in doing which he seemingly considered mankind as having now attained to stronger powers of reasoning, and therefore capable of receiving more sublime truths, than heretofore ; “ the Law having been strictly,” as the scripture says, “ our SCHOOLMASTER “ to bring us unto *Christ*.” *

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* Perhaps a reason, as satisfactory as any other, might be deduced from hence, why Christianity has not been more extensively dispersed in the world, than it is. A great part of mankind may be, for ought we know, really incapable, through their ignorance, of receiving it.

But then to solve, how this itself should come to pass, would be another inquiry, as difficult as the former ; in the pursuit of which, if any one should say, “ that mankind appeared to consist of several different species, naturally distinct from each other,” what great degree of absurdity would there be in the supposition ? We see this, in fact, is the case, with regard to Dogs, and some other Kinds of animals ; among which one species shall greatly excel another, both in beauty, sagacity, and, if I may so say, even in good manners. Why therefore may not the same obtain amongst Men ? appearances are certainly for it : or why, otherwise, should the *Hottentots* and wild *Indians* have continued, from the first date of their existence to the present period, with so few marks of improvement amongst them ? It is not enough to say, that they shew themselves capable of learning things from us ; (for some even of the inferior

However, to speak ingenuously, it is rather our happiness, than it ought to be our pride,

ferior animals are capable of that, as far as their organization will allow them) but the question is, if they really have the same power of perfecting themselves; or, to use a new word, if they are indued with the same perfectionability, which we are; why have they not struck out of their own accord new discoveries; and advanced in improvement, as we have done?

It might be objected to this way of reasoning, that it seems to preclude the Christian Religion from ever attaining to that universality, which both from it's own nature, and from some not obscure prophecies, it was apparently designed to have. Now this objection would be removed by supposing that *our* species, which for distinction's sake may be called the *European*, shall in time possess the whole earth, to the intire exclusion of all the rest. And, if we may guess at consequences, from what has happened within these last two centuries, this will not appear a very absurd hypothesis. Neither is any great violence done to truth by supposing, that some species of beings, even of mankind, may become extinct. What is said both in Scripture and Pagan accounts, about Giants, makes it not improbable, that this has already been the case: and it is evident, that the number of wild beasts is greatly diminished; some whole kinds, such as *Wolves*, which appear to have been formerly the most numerous, scarce existing now, but in pictures and relations; and for specimens of others, we must send much farther, than heretofore was necessary.

It may be observed, as a consequence from hence, that if the slave-trade is to be defended at all, it must seemingly be on some such principles, as the above.

pride, that we excel former times in this article. It was the wisdom of God, and not of men, which brought this to pass: we ought therefore to give God the praise. And yet, oddly as it may sound, it is not absurd in fact to suppose, that even a religion given by God himself, (perfect as it must have come from it's all-wise Author,) may receive, reference being had only to the minds of men; many new additions of beauty and excellence, by being better understood.*

I would not here be thought, to cast the least reflection on the primitive assertors of gospel truth. But surely they had better hearts, than heads. And one would rather praise them for their honest and upright intentions, than condemn in any respect men, to whom we owe so much. Without casting any blame upon them, it must be owned; that learning was declining apace; when Christianity was left to human means for it's support. It was not long afterwards, that

* Nothing seems clearer, than that many things even in this last revelation, were delivered in the manner they are, merely in compliance to the weakness of their ideas, to whom it was first made; which would have put on a very different appearance, had knowledge been in the same state of perfection then, which it is now.

that our Religion, with almost every thing else, was buried in the ruins of the *Roman* empire; where it lay hid in darkness for ages.

Whoever considers this, and reflects farther, how lately it has emerged from this obscurity; how still more lately it has been able to disentangle itself, in any degree, from that rust and rubbish, from those great errors and gross superstitions, which it had contracted in those dark cells, where it had been shut up; and which by length of time, were grown so close to it, that they seemed, and were long * thought to make a part of the Religion itself; whoever, I say, considers these things, will not be surpris'd, either that Christianity has not hitherto been better understood; or, that it is better understood now, than ever it was, since inspiration

* It was indeed no easy task to separate the two, or to point out distinctly, where true and genuine Religion began, and where these ugly, adscititious envelopments ended. Perhaps to some it may seem, as if a part of these still hung round it, which a too great tenderness may have hitherto spared, lest by taking off a wen of a confirmed growth, the health of the body itself should be endangered. And certainly, if ever this should be attempted, the greatest skill and care will be necessary, to prevent all ill consequences.

on ceased; now, when men's understandings are more refined, and their researches into truth more enlarged, than ever they were before!

There are not wanting however some amongst us, who are for shortening these researches; and tell us, it is enough without any thing farther, if we only know, that such a thing *is written*: in which opinion, it may be worth while to observe, they seem to differ a good deal from *St. Philip*; who, upon seeing a person with a Bible in his hand, was not content with merely asking him, what he saw written there; but made this farther inquiry, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And how this business of *understanding* is to be accomplished, without the act of reasoning, without inquiring, by whom any thing was written; on what occasion; with what probable design; how it agrees with other parts of Scripture; and possibly also, how consonant it is to our own notions of God, and the relation we stand in to him; is, I own, a point, far above my comprehension.

One would not suppose, that these men thought the Scripture false; but surely they talk, as if they did: for what harm can in-

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quiries

quiries about it do, if it be true? it is the nature of all truth to love the light; of error, to avoid it. The one acquires fresh charms by being more clearly seen; and the ugliness of the other can no otherwise be fully detected, than by being brought into public view.

They would do well too to tell us, before they take the use of our reason away, what difference there is, between a false Religion, and a true one falsely understood. Let them go to the banks of the *Nile*, and there find out the distinct worth of the *Copti*, and his neighbour the *Mussulman*.*

Or if they do not like to go so far abroad for instances, let them look into some of our modern assemblies of the faithful at home, and point out to us, the specific difference of enthusiasm and superstition, when built upon Christianity, and the same, when arising out of any other mode of worship.

* See an account of the old Serpent, and many other curious Anecdotes about them, in *Norden's Travels*, Vol. 2.

CONCLUSION.

IF the above considerations are so fortunate, as to evince the point, for which they were thrown together; and should make it seem probable, that there has been almost a continual improvement in human Knowledge; they may possibly at the same time suggest a suspicion, that we ourselves, whatever high attainments we may boast, shall be far outdone by those, who come after. But let not this damp our eagerness to get as near perfection, as we can; let it rather animate us, with fresh zeal, to leave as few things unfinished, for posterity to excel us in, as may be.

The End of the Second Part.

ERRATA.

Page x. of the APOLOGY, &c. line the last; for their, read it's.

Page xi. D°. line the 7th; after "don't, dele the comma, or the word "act.

Page viii. of the EXPLANATION, &c. line last but one; for "or lealt, read "or at least.

Page 84. in the Note, line 22; for "in-, read inferior.

Page 99. line the 10th; for philology, read philosophy.

